Mar Baijiev

TALES OF MANAS

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Tales of Manas, poetic form of Kyrgyz epos “Manas”
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Epos Manas is the most important of numerous eposes in Kyrgyz oral literature. The epos describes the miraculous birth and courageous deeds of a great hero named Manas who won back the Kyrgyz land from enemies and united the exiled 40 Kyrgyz tribes. Manas is not a historical personality, but rather a legendary and ideal hero, who had several real prototypes. He is a figure who unifies Kyrgyz nation as one and is described as a “lion” and primarily known as “generous”. I hope you enjoy this wonderful epos.

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ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Akylay is a native Kyrgyz who grew up studying verses of Epos Manas and celebrating its epic stories. This project started from her desire to teach her own American children (who only speak English) about their Kyrgyz family history and the rich culture of a country that is rarely studied.

Akylay lives in Florida and works as a high school science teacher. She strongly believes that bilingual translators present the best, most honest work. Back when she attended a Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University she used to love Mar Baijiev's books, and when his Russian version of Tales of Manas was published in 2011, she was in awe with how it expressed the ideas and cultural nuances in full color. Learn more about this translation and Akylay's other work at www.talesofmanas.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE

When Akylay came to me with her finished translation of the first book of Manas, I was intrigued by an epic poem unfamiliar to me but not surprised of my ignorance of its existence...that is, until she briefed me on the magnitude of the story's importance. Manas holds such a key role in Kyrgyzstan's identity and has found its way around Central Asia, China, and Russia, so not only was I taken aback by my own blind spot— I wondered how anyone interested in epic poetry, old myth, or world history could overlook such a monumental work for so many years.

The lack of available studies and translations in English seemed wrong before even approaching the story itself. In her forward Akylay gives a thorough rundown of the social and political factors for why this highly revered epos took so long to find wider support. Even so, I went into it expecting a novel experience, only to have the depth of the epic blow the doors off my understanding of the history of the region and epics as a whole.

The long and perilous road Manas took to modern times is not unlike the trials the tribes of the story endured after they were exiled from their homelands by the Chinese, though the difficulty in bringing the tale to English readers doesn't only lie in the political limitations and opposition.

To date there are few English translations, the most prominent of which being by non-Kyrgyz natives and translators self-described as lacking poetic abilities. In all fairness, this translation is a particularly weighty task. The typical epics that come to mind, Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, are a small fraction of the length of Manas, which in its entirety reaches around 500,000 lines (in comparison, neither of the Greek epics break 15,000 lines, while the Indian Mahabharata nears 200,000).

Another integral part of Manas is its song-like recitation, traditionally sang by a manaschi and performed with dynamic character acting and cutting syllabic emphasis. Not only was the poem orally passed down for centuries, but each manaschi imbued the tale with their own voice and personality.

The content and style of the poem only make the absence of more widespread Western discussion of epics and myth more felt, though again helps explain the difficulty of translation from anyone without a proper understanding of Kyrgyz language and culture.

Considering how much is covered in the lengthy epos, its genre, medium, and placement in fiction or non-fiction is difficult to pin down under a definitive label. In the first book alone, we see the entire span of a single heroic life along with the customs, values, and traditions of a nomadic tribe all packed into a story hard to distinguish as belonging more to myth or loose historical account.

Manas weaves in and out of poetic descriptions of its pastoral and mountainous settings, fable storytelling which lays out philosophies and codes of conduct, diagrams of home life and family honor systems, mythic conquest – often times all within a single chapter. Scenes of celebrations like the wedding toi or the funeral ash are as much ethnographic artifacts as they are political and social dramas. The tales of Manas can be read as straightforward, allegorical, or merely inspired poetic accounts. Recordings of Kyrgyz manaschis can even be enjoyed without a literacy in the language. The result of this mixture is a story which, despite in many ways centering around war, conquest, destruction, and oppression, contains just as much love, joy, community togetherness, and art in its preservation of identity. Exiled from their own land, Manas and his clans are persistent and deeply principled. To explore the story is to explore Kyrgyz culture from the Middle Ages, and as the ripples of influence continue to reach out, to explore Kyrgyz culture both modern and ancient is to better understand the strength of Manas.

The style and form are slightly more constant than the divided attention given to its various subjects, with every line following a hypnotic iamb of 7-9 syllables, though the length of chapters and stanzas is looser, and the ever-present sense of rhyme and wordplay flows in and out as it pleases. Manas rarely sacrifices its intent of presenting a dense depiction of Kyrgyz life for the sake of fitting a rigid set of rules, at times even doing away with poetic structure in favor of straight prose.

To experience Manas as a non-native completely new to the story would seem too late to the party (over 1000 years too late if going by the UN's designation) to catch up, but the readability of the epos is a testament to what Akylay has done here. Between her Kyrgyz upbringing, her multilingual background, her use of a lyrical Russian translation as a base, and her own creative intuitions, Akylay is able to do the story justice and put her own signature on the tale much as a manaschi would their performance.

Many Kyrgyz terms are maintained here, defined in their first appearance and catalogued in the glossary, which, along with the occasions of grammar fitting for the historical period and the epic's mythical tone, keep a bond between the sound of the original and a modern reading.

Daniel Johnson

FOREWORD

From a historical perspective, this great epos of the world, this huge legacy of the Kyrgyz people has seen both fortunate and unfortunate times.

In a larger cultural and scientific world no one heard of the epos for a long time, mostly due to the fact that in the eras of great manaschis like Choyuke, Tynybek, and Balyk, there were no ways of recording their performances.

On its path the Kyrgyz epos met many difficulties, many hurdles. Moreover, in defending this epos and preparing translations into Russian language, people suffered, scientists and scholars were shot during Soviet times.

Throughout the years the Kyrgyz people used epos Manas whenever they experienced difficult, fateful times. It was actively discussed during the October Revolution, when it was necessary to raise the national culture, in the 1920s-1930s. During WWII Manas was useful more than ever, giving support to soldiers on the front, lifting the spirit of people at home.

During the post-Stalin period scientists started researching and translating the epos, and during Khrushchev's Thawing period the theme of historical roots and imperishable cultural values of the Kyrgyz became necessary in the face of ideological Mankurtism prevalent in the country.

It is not surprising, therefore, that it is Manas, with its powerful unifying pathos and themes of national revival, which became the main cultural/ideological platform for a very young independent Kyrgyz state. It is clear that every Kyrgyz will always honor this heroic-tragic epos, be proud of being a part of it, and continue to research and value its great ideas, learning from the lessons it teaches.

But it has not been all opposition along the way. In the second half of the 19th century, when two outstanding Turkologist-ethnographers and travelers V. Radlov and Ch. Valikhanov stumbled upon this epos by accident, immediately realizing the unique gem of cultural heritage they had found.

All Kyrgyz first-generation literary writers, the so-called pioneers of the 1920s, were unanimous in their opinion that epos Manas is an invaluable cultural heritage of the past, that it must be collected, systematized, studied scientifically, and published. Among Kyrgyz scientists, those who paid the most attention and did everything in their power to preserve it, those who especially should be considered include K. Tynystanov, Sh. Kokenov, B. Kenensariev, S. Karachev, E. Polivanov, Yu. Abdrahmanov, E. Isakeev, A.

Orozbekov, A. Sydykov, T. Aitmatov, and T. Baijiev; the most tragic part is that all of these amazing scientists were shot during Stalin's repression.

This epos was fortunate, finally, that it has made its way into the global community, and in 1994 the General Assembly of the United Nations made a decision on the worldwide celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the epos Manas, implemented in 1995.

One cannot blame the Soviet authorities or anyone specifically, since this very power self-realized in an uneasy struggle of ideas and views, adding the human factor where in which angles of perspective on many things were changed over the years.

Two of my favorite writers are the sons of scholars who were repressed in those unfortunate years: Chyngyz Aitmatov, the son of Torekul Aitmatov, and Mar Baijiev, the son of Tashym Baijiev. Both writers continued their father's work in researching Epos Manas.

Chyngyz Aitmatov, who studied the epos and Kyrgyz folklore extensively, cited that epos Manas is 'ocean-like' and the crowning peak of the entire Kyrgyz spiritual heritage, coming from the depths of the past centuries. He found that it bears traces of ancient (archaic) literary traditions. Noting these qualities of the epos, the writer comes to the following conclusion: "primordial realism is intertwined with fairy-tale fantasy, symbolism and allegory – with deep psychology, philosophy is closely connected with the belief in magic and miraculous, intimate feelings going back to passions rooted deep in one's heart, and at the same time love is governed by the tribal and patriarchal interests of feudal society. Manas is a vast world of the Kyrgyz nation's past, which they contribute into the panorama of world culture."

There are attempts to connect certain motifs of the epos to known historical facts and events, but Manas is not a chronicle. For the most part, it is an artistic and poetic work in which the historical life of the people is reflected in general artistic expressions, where the facts and phenomena of historical and social life are interpreted in terms of a poetic generalization of all the typical characteristics that have been in the life of the people for many centuries.

Chyngyz Aitmatov writes: "of course, in Epos Manas there are reflections of objective reality and historical realities one way or another related to the fate and life of the Kyrgyz. Moreover, it can be stated axiomatically that the very appearance of the epos was directly conditioned by a certain historical epoch, the specific cultural context of the epoch, the specific social, ideological

situation, and, most importantly, the fateful needs for the consolidation of people's forces."

I chose to translate The Tales of Manas written by Mar Baijiev in Russian and Kyrgyz languages which in my opinion expressed the story so skillfully and conveyed the ideas and cultural nuances in full color. There are very few translations of this epos available in English and the versions that are available do not do a work of this magnitude justice. I believe the fact that Mar Baijiev is a bilingual writer, whose native language is Kyrgyz and who can call the Russian language as one of his own, played a very big role. When I read Epos Manas in the Kyrgyz language, which was transcribed from the recordings of great manaschis Sayakbai Karalaev and Sagymbai Orozbakov, I see that Mar Baijiev's translation into Russian is very accurate and has every flavor of rich, colorful language that the Kyrgyz version of the epos conveys.

As a native Kyrgyz who went to Russian school and attended Russian University, I would like to think that both of these languages are my native tongues as well. I am a high school Science teacher in the USA and have been living in South Florida for the past 16 years. After I graduated from college in the US and started a family here, I wanted my children to be able to appreciate the culture and literature of the country their mother came from. Along with that I believe that there are other people who will find this wonderful epos interesting as well.

I would like to dedicate my work to Great Spirit of Manas, who is not only a hero for every Kyrgyz but also responsible for the foundation built for present day Kyrgyzstan; to the great manaschis of the past and present; to every scientist and linguist who dedicated their life to this great epos; to my mother, who read this epos to me; to my brother, Keneshbek Baimatov, who instilled in me love for my country and people; and to my children, who I hope will carry on this love for Kyrgyz culture.

Akylay Baimatova

Tales of Manas

THE BEGINNING

The tale of very distant past
Goes on and on today.
An eternal tale of courage
The people of Kyrgyz convey,
Passed down from elder to their kin–
The epic spoken word begins.
The mesh of fiction and the truth
Combines and forms in one accord;
The witnesses of these affairs,
Have not seen light for many years
And only God knows all the scores!
The time like sand fell through the hands,
The rivers changed their course on lands,
The lakes went dry, just pebbly strands.
Though centuries have changed the Earth,
No heat, no wind, no natural force
Or human action, bloody wars
Could ever take away these words.

The people suffered long with grief
And survived through gory times,
With chants of immortality
It lived in hearts, formed paradigms.
It called for freedom, victory;
Defenders of the native soil–
Their tales forged into stone to keep,
The people carried in their souls
The tale from a thousand years ago
When Kyrgyz were exiled from home.
Manas united a strong khanate
Returned his people to their land
On great campaigns against Chinese,

This batyr[1] was valiant,
Defender of the people he–
Now hear this tale and make your pleas.

[1] Hero

THE TALE OF THE RUIN OF THE KYRGYZ BY ALOOKE KHAN

From ancient years the Kyrgyz tribes
Protected sacred land Kyzyr.
Khan Karahan– birthright began,
From Karakhan to Oguzkhan,
From Oguzkhan to Alancha,
From Alancha came Baygurkhan,
From Baygurkhan came Babyrkhan.

From Babyrkhan – Khan Tebey,
And Tebey's son was Khan Kogey.
His sons were Chyiyr and Shygay,
The youngest one was Khan Nogoy.

Usen, Orozdu, Bai, Akbalta
And Jakyp were sons of Nogoy.
Nogoy was a mighty khan–
For people in the sacred land
He stood– a wall against defeat
In bloody wars with Chinese, Mongols
He kept his people in one piece.

The rumor was that Khan Nogoy
Was a nabob, a fighting force,
His reputation kept back foes,
So, when the gutsy Khan Nogoy
Left to meet his mighty maker,
The deceitful, greedy Alooke–
Head of the Chinese, Mongols-
Assailed the Kyrgyz– burnt their yurts,
The khanate's heroes were outnumbered,
Many wives became widows!

They turned young women into slaves,
Alooke sold girls as concubines,

The herds were taken– none remained.
Suffering, calamity, famine
Reigned the vast and empty land.
Jakyp's brother Akbalta
Consulted him with dire thoughts:
"How long shall we suffer in silence?
Now's the time to curb the evil
Kangai keeping us in violence!
Is it not better to die together
For honor of our own homeland
Than live in slavery, asundered?"

Calling to arms every soul
Who can hold weapons– stand and fight!
The Kyrgyz troops led by Akbalta
Marched to gruesome battle that night.

The people gave them all their blessings,
Asked the Gods for victory,
The prayers were heard and thus, the setting:
Kangai merchants rode on camels
Loaded with untold goods, passing through
Carrying gold and silver towards China
To the greedy hands of Alooke,
Jakyp, Akbalta and their men
Caught up with the gilded caravan,
Sacked the envoys– ill deeds were done
They took all of their goods with them.

The word soon got out to Alooke,
His army then besieged Kyrgyz.
Assailants laid their violent hands,
Destroyed them all, killed in a row–
The bodies of both young and old
Laid lifeless, those who still had breath,
Were raped in front of their ancestors.

The fertile land of Kyrgyz tribes
Turned into burning hell at once.
The cruel fate came in and forced them
To flee from death away and far,
Some to Bapan,
Some to Altai.
Other Kyrgyz chose Kangai,
And more, to faraway Eren.
Leaving their homeland behind
For distant grounds remote from them.
The Kangai tied up Usen's hands,
And drove along to North Orhan.

Leaving their land, their father’s land,
Bai fled to far Siberia,
Immense were fears of Orozdu,
To save his family from harm
He took them all to Enisei.
Nogoy’s youngest – Jakyp and Akbalta
Were captured, tied, exiled to the North.
The Kyrgyz tribes stretched all through Earth.
Rough mountain rivers had Altai,
The country of Manchu– Kalmak.

The forty Kyrgyz yurts were built,
To feed their young they served Kalmak
And took their herd to highland pastures.
Jakyp’s brother Akbalta,
Once slaughtered a huge gray ox,
And called his relatives to meal feast
With prudent words for them to hear:
“Serving Kalmak and Manchu,
Keeping eyes on their livestock,
We’ll never see the end of hunger.

Let's take our shovels, plows and forks–
In Altai we will grow our grain.
The local folk will have to learn
How grain turns into bread and feed.

We'll trade our grain for cattle, gold,
And end this shameful poverty!"
Jakyp then rose from his seat,
With words supporting Akbalta.

The younger relatives agreed
So all the forty Kyrgyz yurts
Seized on the noble work indeed.
They overturned the layers of earth
Some with the shovel, some with plow,
Sowed grain in spring and fed by river;
Autumn brought them fertile reap.

Learning the taste of grain and hop
From drink made from a millet seed,
Kalmak and mountain tribes Manchu
Began to beg Kyrgyz to trade
For a handful of wheat, they gave a foal,
For crust of bread and jug of bozo[2]
They gave an ingot of precious gold.
(From ancient times Altaian people
Were very skilled at getting gold
By washing river, sand, and silt)
The trade brought cattle to the yards;
Both gold and silver filled their chests.
Their horses grazed the mountain grass,
The meat was more than they could eat,
Kymyz filled all of their chanaches[3] –
Altaian fertile, virgin soil

[2] A fermented drink from whole millet and sprouted wheat
[3] Chanach- a wineskin made from smoked goatskin skins (it is used as a vessel for koumiss, to store grains)

Had thanked the Kyrgyz for their heed!
Jakyp worked both day and night
The soil was grateful to him too.
His riches grew, more than the others,
They called him “bai”[4] for ways he drew.

[4] Bai- rich man

THE MARRIAGE OF BAI JAKYP

The natal brother of Jakyp,
Chiyir, suffered a sudden death,
And his graceful wife, Shakan,
Was turned into a widow young.

Jakyp with handsome dowry went
To Shakan's own kinsmen to speak,
He promised her a life of plenty,
Persuaded them to let him wed.
The young widow looked so resplendent,
A gleeful wedding toi[5] was held.
In loving memory of his brother
Jakyp named her Chyiyirdy.

One night she asked her husband:
“Tell me what are you grieving for?
I see the sadness in your eyes.
You have the riches of the Khan,
The herds of horses, countless sheep,
The grain in bins is overflowed,
Your clan’s kismet is in your hands,
Or maybe, new misfortune comes?”

Jakyp turned to her and said:
“With all the goods, the herds, the grain,
The strain of work has wearied me.
All I got with sweat and blood–
Who will I give upon my death?

What is the purpose of this wealth,
If I don’t have a progeny?
Why was I born? Why have I lived

[5] Toi-celebration ceremony

A life so like a fruitless tree
With no continuum of blood?"

"Then, maybe husband, you will take
Tokol[6], young wife, into your yurt?
Let her bring us little ones,
We'll watch them grow and make them strong."
Chyiyrdy gave her sound advice.

Altai has known for one Kyrgyz
To have a healthy child, not a beast,
Some generations need to pass[7] –
At least seven before mixing blood.

Surrounded with Manchu, Kalmak,
Chinese, Chukcha, and Khanty,
Where would you find a wife for me?"
Jakyp bai asked his Chyirdy.

In order to live in peace and harmony, like sisters, without tactless jealousy, the younger wife – tokol – as a rule, was chosen by the elder wife – baibyche[8]. Chyiyrdy went with her husband's relatives in search of the bride. She traveled around the nearby villages and chose the daughter of a rich Kalmak man, the beautiful Bakdolet. The Kyrgyz arranged a magnificent wedding for Bakdolet, paying a large dowry and making friends with the Kalmaks.

The fourth year had come and gone
Since bai Jakyp had wed again
But Bakdolet was childless still.
Jakyp began to lose his thrill,
Repined about God-given will,
A void in heir of his own blood.

[6] Second wife
[7] Kyrgyz people traditionally know their ancestors seven generations back, and before each marriage they know their tribes and make sure they are not related
[8] First wife

“Others are blessed with daughters, sons,
And I am one, alone in tears,
Though I've been married many years.
My house is joyful as a crypt–
No children's scream, just fate’s cruel trick.

Why heap my yurt with gold and silver?”
The old man grieved once more.
“The time will come for another world,
Relations will come to see me off,
No one will shed a tear for me
With cries – 'My father! Father’s gone!'

Who will take our hunting birds?
And with the younger falcons, train?
Who will take aibalta[9] and spear,
And stand for clans in trying days?

Indeed, when people regain their strength,
Will they be forced to wander again
The unknown lands and ‘scape the bane?
Why do I have two wives here,
If both of them are barren– why?”

Hearing Jakyp’s bitter words,
Chyiyrdy also with him cried:
“It looks like your poor old wife,
Was created just for grief.

I have made peace with the fact,
That God forbade of me a child.
I’ve passed my childbearing years,
Lived half a century almost,
But tell me this, my dear husband,

[9] An axe (Kyrgyz)

Why Bakdolet, your younger wife,
Has not yet given you a child
When she is both young and so loved,
With snobbish grins as if her hem
Has brought you many little ones?”

Bakdolet

“Dear sister, I came later than you,”
Returned the favor Bakdolet,
“So what is your excuse in youth?
Your hem was empty as a widow!
Why was your womb desolate?
For me– I’m waiting for my turn,”
Without a care she spoke the words.

And hearing this from the tokol,
From which, indeed, there was some truth,
The weeping bitter baibiche fell
Onto her bed, so none would hear her ruth.

Having come to her senses then,
She raised her arms to starry heaven,
And through the tyundyuk[10] overhead
She looked above and prayed to God:
“Hear me now, Koke-Tengir[11],
Bless my old man with health, I ask!
Grant me once again my youth!

Relinquish senses, even life,
As long as the fetus is alive.
Give Bakdolet conception, God,
The stupid beauty is a sod.
If we are sinners in your eyes,
Forgive us all, please, my dear God.
I will give everything to you,
Just give us child for our due!”
Chyirdy fell asleep in tears;
She had a prescient dream it seems:
An old wise man appeared to her,
With kind voice, he said in a blur:
“Tengir has willed to shed no tear:

[10] Tyundyuk- the construction of a spherical shape, crowned by A Kyrgyz yurt, also is symbol of light
[11] Koke-Tengir, also Tenir- God of skies (Pre-Islamic polytheism) of nomadic tribes

He sends this apple– eat, don't fear."
The old man spoke and vanished clear.

She hardly tasted that sweet fruit,
Her belly grew with fastest route,
Then down she looked, felt one great clout,
And saddled a scaly dragon-scout.
In fear, baibyche woke up, confused–
She could not understand her dream.

Jakyp suddenly awoke
With joyful spirit said to wife:
"My spouse, the days of worry are done,
God sent a message– have no fuss
Let's call our relatives and friends
To help interpret dreams for us."
Jakyp's younger wife appeared,
Made sudden entrance with a bow.

"Forgive me, spouse. I'm sorry, sister,
For coming in without my turn.
I had the most amazing dream!
"The hunt was on, and you, dear spouse,
Were with fierce falcon Ak-Shumkar
Who spread his mighty wings in flight
And rushed to heaven, leaving here
Upon the ground, close to the yurt
Two falcon chicks both gazing up
With envy looking at their brother."

Chiyirdy then replied to both:
"How many years have we been childless?
Punishment for our greediness.
Is this a sign from Koke-Tengir?
Today the three of us had dreams.
Call everyone for lavish feast:

The relatives, the neighbors, friends,
Manchu, Kalmak– don't be amiss.
Give sacrifice of many horses
So everyone has plenty meat.
My sister, me– we ask you this:
Arrange a toi to show this bliss."

From native land into Altai
Masses of Kyrgyz arrived.
Seventy yurts came from once forty
(Young people married and produced
New generations rather shortly).

Jakyp slaughtered fine nine horses
For his guests: one hundred sheep,
Seven cows, two camels even,
A bai so generous has not been known, since.
Jakyp was known for being stingy–
Is this Jakyp? What's going on?
The guests all meddled early on.
After they all had beshbarmak[12]
Four persons per one big tavak[13],
The gracious host gathered the guests
And dreams were told in all details:

"The big hawk sat on my tyundyk,
A boisterous, loud scream it had,
With feathers of pure, shiny gold,
Glistening with every stroke.
Its eyes were burning like a fire,
The beak had the hue of steel,
And claws were sharper than a dagger.

[12] Kyrgyz dish from meat and square-cut noodles
[13] Big serving plate

Long silky jesses I had woven–
The hawk flew right to my tyunduk,
Folded its wings– was this a fluke?
The one who can decipher the dream
A big reward will get from me.

My baibyche had the dream as well,
Soon as she tasted a sweet, bright fruit
Her belly had the biggest swell,
She saddled a dragon, rode the brute,
And flew back to our native land.
Then, my second wife, tokol,
Had dreamt the same that very night:
As if directly to her yurt,
Two falcons flew, and Bakdolet
Embraced them lovingly at once.

What is the meaning of these dreams?
None of us could comprehend."
When all was said and questions posed
Wise Akbalta stood and proposed:
"Jakyp, you had prophetic dreams!

It will come true, believe in that,
And if you took a hawk to hand
God sent your long-awaited son;
A glorious warrior he will be,
A mighty leader for our clans.

And if you tied that hawk to yurt,
It means your son will be the root
For all our people, his repute.
If baibyche was riding a dragon,
Your son will unite all Kyrgyz
From every corner of earth,
Brother will be like brother, as one,

Your son will shield from enemies,
the people, and the land of ours."

Learning the meaning of the dreams,
Jakyp cried as if he was a child.
Astute and prudent Akbalta
Remembered those two falcon chicks
in the dream Bakdolot depicted.

"The Mighty Lord will send you sons!"
The guests all raised their hands to God
And asked to bless Jakyp's two wives
For all their dreams to turn to life.

In righteous work the years soon passed,
The meadows changed their carpet casts.
The gardens changed their colors twice,
When all had learned Chyirdy with child,
And craved a tiger's heart, not spice!

All night and day she whined for it,
Jakyp forgot his restful sleep.
Badal, his shepherd told him that
He knew a hunter who shot a tiger.
"Here's a bar of gold– please take
And bring that tiger's heart at once!"
Badal found him that hunter quick,
The bar of gold was traded then
For tiger's heart without a snick.
Chyirdy washed the heart in water,
Boiled it and gorged a mouthful.
Satisfied, she fell asleep.

Nine months later baibyche had pains;
A mare was made a sacrifice
For easy childbirth, so they placed

A gold bakan[14] in the heart of the yurt,
And holding it for sturdiness
Chyirdy moaned in agony:
“Oh, dear God, please, have mercy on me!”
Her midwife– skilled kindik-ene[15]
Was powerless to ease the hurting “
This child is unkind to me
“And surely, I am soon to die,
While stingy, old Jakyp will stay
With young and stupid Bakdolot!

In joy with baby and tokol,
Delirious baybiche complained
On this whole ordeal's pricey toll.
Without getting a wink of sleep,
She suffered through the seven nights.

And then the very hour arrived,
For poor Chyirdy to give birth.
The wife of their neighbor, Berdike,
A lady full of life and mirth,
Prepared to deliver her child.

The elder wife of Akbalta
Had time to tell Jakyp the news
That his baibyche was giving birth.
Jakyp wept and said to her:
“I'll give forty stallions to
The one who brings me happy news.

I will prepare that suyunchu[16].
This old man's heart that's always strong
Will burst from joy his son is born.

[14] Pole
[15] A midwife (Kyrgyz)
[16] A reward for someone who delivers good news

I do not wish that people see,
That shameful death of me in glee.
I will retreat to mountains now
And long for news that Gods endow.
But if the daughter will be born
Do not send anyone to me.

If son is born send word at once
So he can take his syuyunchu"!
And on the mountain slopes he saw
populous flocks of sheep and goats.

The herd was vigilantly guarded
By a man named Zhorgoboz.
His yellow-dun was in repose,
Yet getting ready to give birth.

"If foal comes to the light of day,
Aymanboz– I will give its name.
Oh dear God, please help my wife
And let her bring an heir for me!
I will give this newborn horse
To only one– my dearest son!"
Not long before he'd time to think,
the pregnant mare clammed up asudden.
Jakyp hurried off the saddle–
The poor creature gave new life!

BIRTH OF BATYR

Forget the old man in the highlands
Busy with his herd so far,
Turn your attention to baibyche,
No one had heard of any wife
Who in eight days and seven nights
Could not birth a single child.

Twelve groaning midwives all as one
Pressed on the woman's belly till
All of the fluid from the womb
Ran gushing out in quiet rill.

The child followed– what mighty scream!
A future ruler he beseemed!
His voice the whole country could hear,
He clenched his fists and kept them near,
Handfuls of blood he kept in both!

The impatient mother hollered:
"Who is there? A son or daughter?!
Tell me, ladies, quickly now!"
She saw the child's pecker– a boy,
Chyiyrdy's heart skipped a beat,
Her chest stopped moving, all effete.

The midwives all then cried in panic,
So quick the new mother's beat was absent.
"Do eyes deceive me? Prove me wrong!
Whom gave I birth– a son or daughter?
These days have lasted more than years!
And you, dambyldynyn ayaly[17]
Please cut the cord with your sharp knife!"

[17] Wife of a clergyman

And Kanymjan leaned on to take
The child to swaddle, a little shake.
The boy surprised and moved his shoulders
With the weight of men age thirty!
“You stupid woman, can’t you handle
Swaddling a newborn baby?”
Bakdolet sat with sass and watched
How midwife failed to lift the child.
“This must mean the Lord has sent
A mighty hero to us then!”
She put some ghee[18] in the newborn's mouth.

The mother took the baby now,
Put him to bosom– milk there flowed.
She gave her breast to child again,
Her nipples bloody, what a groan!
From fear to pain, covered in blood,
Chiyirdy nearly saw her end.

Let’s leave a mother with her son,
And turn our gaze to mountain tops
Where an old man, with bated breath
Was waiting for word from the valley.

To claim a prize for biggest news
The young and old climbed those steep drops,
To find the restless bai Jakyp
And win the valued suyunchu.

Sulaika went to her home
To keep her husband in the know.
Akbalta stayed in yurt alone,
Sitting and watching firestone.

[18] In Kyrgyz culture-midwife puts ghee in newborn's mouth as soon as baby comes out. It is believed it gives baby strength and makes him/her healthy

“Old man, have you turned so deaf?
Have you not heard the mass enthuse?
Your stingy brother gave promise
To gift a herd of pricey stallions
For who brings him happy news.
Should you not get at least one horse,
From your own brother? Don’t you snooze!
Can you not grasp an easy task?”
His angry wife was getting hoarse.
Akbalta, known to hold his temper
Yet was angered from his spouse,
“Your words are ungodly, Sulaika,
Suspicious people we have seen.

The slaves and crooks and hungry folk,
Watching other people’s herds,
And those who have no shelters, too–
You want me to run along with them?
To go to highlands on a horse?
I have no might in me or force!

A lengthy week without your sleep
You’ve helped her with the birthing pains.
What have you gotten as your reap?”
“Here are my gifts!” She told her husband
And threw two coats with elecheck[19].
Despondent, tired Akbalta
Saddled his old horse Kekcholok.
Hardly on his seat he rode
To bring Jakyp the joyous news.

And at this moment bai Jakyp,
Was washing a colt, just newly born.
He cleared his nostrils, ears, and mouth,

[19] Women’s headdress

Put on his feet and that was it!
The foal soon found its mother's milk.

Akbalta roared loud from afar:
"Suyunchu, brother, suyunchu!
Your baibiche gave to you a lion!"
Jakyp, once he heard the news,
Was stunned and almost lost himself.

"For this good news, my dear brother,
A brick of gold I'll give to you,
And add to that a herd of forty!
Take all, 'Balta, let's be swift!
We need to get to Chyirdy.
My son's godfather you will be!"
And bai Jakyp ran to his horse
As if in early years of youth.

He rushed to the valley, to his son.
His baibiche there came out to greet
With newborn son in arms to meet.
When father saw his son and wife
He felt he saw the Mother God,
The holy Mary holding Child!
"Oh, I could die right here and now!
My God, I'm thankful for your grace!"
The tears rolled on his joyful face.
He held his son close to the heart.
To celebrate the birth of an heir
He ordered toi for the joy to impart.

Chyiyrdy

THE CELEBRATION OF BIRTH

He called in guests from furthest lands:
From Ural's hills, distant Irtysh,
The east, where Manchu China expands,
the word was sent to Hindu Kush.

The yurts hung his ancestral banner,
Seven hundred hearths were dug,
Close to a hundred dwellings too,
Prepared their meat to greet the guests.

They all sat down 'round one tavak
Manchu, Chinese, and the Kalmak,
The natives of Mongolian steppes,
As well as next of kin Kazakh.

The days would pass, the years would fly,
Those who were at the feast that time
Would keep this toi in their mind's eye.
The tournaments, the wrestling games
All ended with the big baige[20].

So bai Jakyp called his guests
And asked to give his son a name.
The puzzle was for everyone–
Ambitious task with prize to claim,
And yet, not one of the sages
Could give name for this new son.

One man appeared, this vagabond
Was noticed quickly at that toi
"Let his name's first sound thus be "Ma"–
The same that starts the name Muhammad,

[20] Prize (Kyrgyz)

Prophet, messenger of God
Who calls on mankind to adhere,
To purify both soul and body!
The second sound let be an “N”–
From Noah's name that we all know.
The holy Bible tells us now
When flood has reached upon the Earth,
He was the savior of all who lived!
The end will have a word of “Sin”–
Invincible, a lion’s kin.

“Your God is you,” said Buddha, once,
Your shoulders are your scales.
Be just in your affairs,
Be thoughtful, fair always!
When we put all together this,
We’ll get ‘Manas'. Manas– his name!

The name as such, as strongest stone,
God will protect for the longest time!”
He shouted “Alas”[21] three times in a row,
And once he named the child Manas
The nomad vanished with a bow.

When guests had left and went away,
The brothers gathered by themselves.
Prudent Akbalta shared his thoughts:
“I received a message not long ago–
The villainous, cruel Esenkhan
Had learned from oracles of his
The fact that in our clans we have
A newborn son, batyr Manas
Who will unite all Kyrgyz and
Will win the wars against Chinese;

[21] Blessing (Tengrism)

To China he will lead campaigns
Eastern Beijing he will destroy.

So ordered, this cruel Esenkhan,
The search for boys all named Manas,
To catch and execute at once!
Henceforth I ask you all for this–
Mislead the evil and dismiss
The name Manas until the time
He's able to wear his cuisses.
Let’s all call him the 'Big Buffoon',
And when he turns into a man,
When shield and sword he takes like one
We will return his name– Manas,
But now the order is like this:
He’s 'Big Buffoon', don’t be remiss!”

Chyiyrdy with Manas

MANAS'S CHILDHOOD

The time flew by, and day by day
Our Big Buffoon was growing up
In leaps and bounds, by every hour–
Altaian highlands saw to that.

Since he first saw the light of day
Eight years had rushed by like a shot.
Manas was stalwart, unlike others:
He carried stones of heavy weight,
And to assess his strength he made up
Games of merit on the spot.

Into the icy lake he dove,
Ran faster than the northern wind.
He started fights with neighbor's kids.
Chyirdy couldn't make up her mind,
Whether her son was unwell or sound.

Out of control, the rowdy child,
But if he put his mind to goals
No one could hope to hold him from.
Such testaments of character,
Jakyp had not seen anywhere–
Running away from home alone
With no regard to parents' words.
To cause mischief in far jailoo[22]
From all the yurts that stood close by
He made a team of Kyrgyz boys.
They chose their leaders, played ordo[23],
And cleared the thickets and the stumps;
In made up wars amongst themselves
They formed their fighting squad for fun.

[22] Highland pasture
[23] A game using joint bones from sheep, cows

And then one day into their land,
a group of young Kalmak arrived
Intent on bringing down Kyrgyz–
Remind them who their true chief is.

Holding their sticks and belts in hands,
they came to kids playing ordo.
Manas was seized by the lapels,
Alchis, sakas[24] were snatched away.

Some boys were then struck in the face,
some got a kick from these Kalmak.
The circling ones who rode on horse
Gave strong hits on their bare backs.

“Kyrgyz! To battle!” called Manas.
One Kalmak was pierced between the eyes,
another felt brute force to the head.
Then all the forty Kyrgyz teens
(A high-skilled and accordant squad)
Surrounded wrongdoers in the ring,
Taught them a lesson on how to fight,
And then they sent them on their way.
The rumor spread through these highlands
That Big Buffoon, bai’s only son,
Had beaten up Kalmak’s whole clan.
They feared now that a feud would start
Between the clans Kyrgyz-Kalmak
So bai Jakyp said to his wife:
“You see, our son is not that smart,
He makes his enemies all ‘round.
Against his kind he sets them all.

[24] Joint bones from sheep, cows

Amongst Kalmak for many years
We lived our lives without a brawl.
I treasure this rich northern land,
The natives are an earnest people.
Khan Chayan, Boyon khan's son,
Respects me as his truest friend,
Gave me his daughter as tokol.

My fear is that our Big Buffoon
Will cause a war with our neighbors,
Force us all to leave this land
That gave us bread and sturdy shelter.
All the riches I have made
Will turn to dust, nothing to dower.

All the cattle, herds of horses
Will go changing hands again.
We need to keep our son away,
Far from the people, to Oshpur
And let him care just for the herds."

Jakyp called his son to talk:
"You see, my son, we are so poor
And cannot test our luck for long.
No cows, no horses, so few sheep
In my possession, far from throngs.
To Oshpur-bai you will go, son.
Serve him as shepherd for a while.

See to his cows and to their calves,
And maybe by the spring you'll earn
About thirty newborn lambs."
Jakyp took his son and went
To the jailoo and Oshpur's hands.
"I beg of you, dear Oshpur-bai,
Look after my rambunctious son.

Be stern to thoughtless pranks he has,
Teach him to be a laborer."
With heavy heart Jakyp returned
To his own home, hiding his tears.

Five years in mountains spent Manas,
Five years he guarded all the calves.
Twelve years of age, he turned a teen
With young nomads– a squad he gleaned.

In wrestling games and tournaments
They all were eager to compete,
On bantam donkeys they arranged
A rival sport of er-sayish[25].

They sewed red banners from their rags
And all cried out– "Manas! Manas!"
The noisy squad went on campaigns
To practice at their battle skills.

They baked fresh meat on spits just made,
And having settled by the fire
They snored all night in unison.
Jakyp had come to the jailoo
To have a meeting long overdue.

Oshpur told him all accounts–
His only son, the same Manas,
Had coordinated battling squads.
"And they consume five lambs per day
If this demeanor keeps for long
The flock of sheep will cease, be gone.

[25] Tournament much like jousting

Whole days they fight as if an army,
With battle cry– “Manas! Manas!”
He leads his squad for all to see.
What happens if cruel Esenkhan
Learns that his real birth-given name
Is not the Big Buffon at all,
He's not a shepherd, but Manas?
He’ll find your son to execute!”

With his son alongside him
Jakyp chose to take him home.
For Manas, the valley was too grim:
Herds galloped with such noisy screams,
Ten young Kalmak caught up to them
With lonely shepherd, one Kyrgyz.
The ruthless ten were beating hard
The single shepherd with kamchy[26].
“What is the fault of that Kyrgyz?
Why are they taking all his herd?”
The Big Buffoon asked bai Jakyp.

“The horses in the herd are mine.
And they are beating this poor soul
Because I did not pay them all.
Their highland pastures in our use
Come with a rather hefty price.”

Manas learnt there that bai Oshpur
Was shepherd for his own father.
Jakyp then rushed to save the herd,
The young Kalmak by name Kortuk
Hit bai Jakyp with his kamchy,
Manas could not allow it pass.

[26] A leather whip with wooden handle

Grabbing the loop of ukuruk[27]
He cut his skull with one fell whack.
The rest of ten attacked him then:
The first one fell from horse, another
Followed only seconds later.
Manas was held back by Jakyp:
“Ease your anger, my dear son!
You took a life away today.
They’ll take revenge, a blood for blood!
We should be ones who make amends,
And big kun[28] we need to pay.

To this Manas replied at once:
“Such disgrace the Kangai brought us!
I cannot yield, please acknowledge!
I’ll go to battle for my people,
My slogan is: “Hurray, Manas!”
Successor of Khan Esenkhan
Was Khan Kochku in far Altai.
As soon as he heard rumors that
A single shepherd in jailoo[29]
Had beaten up his strongest men,
Kortuk was killed by that Kyrgyz,
He called the council of his men,
Sent them to rob, destroy and kill
Any Kyrgyz they had in sight.
“Ungrateful you, Burut[30]-Kyrgyz!
I gave you shelter on our lands,
Your stupid shepherd, Big Buffoon,
Has killed Kortuk– we will disband
Your kind, unless you hand him over!
The word will reach to Esenkhan

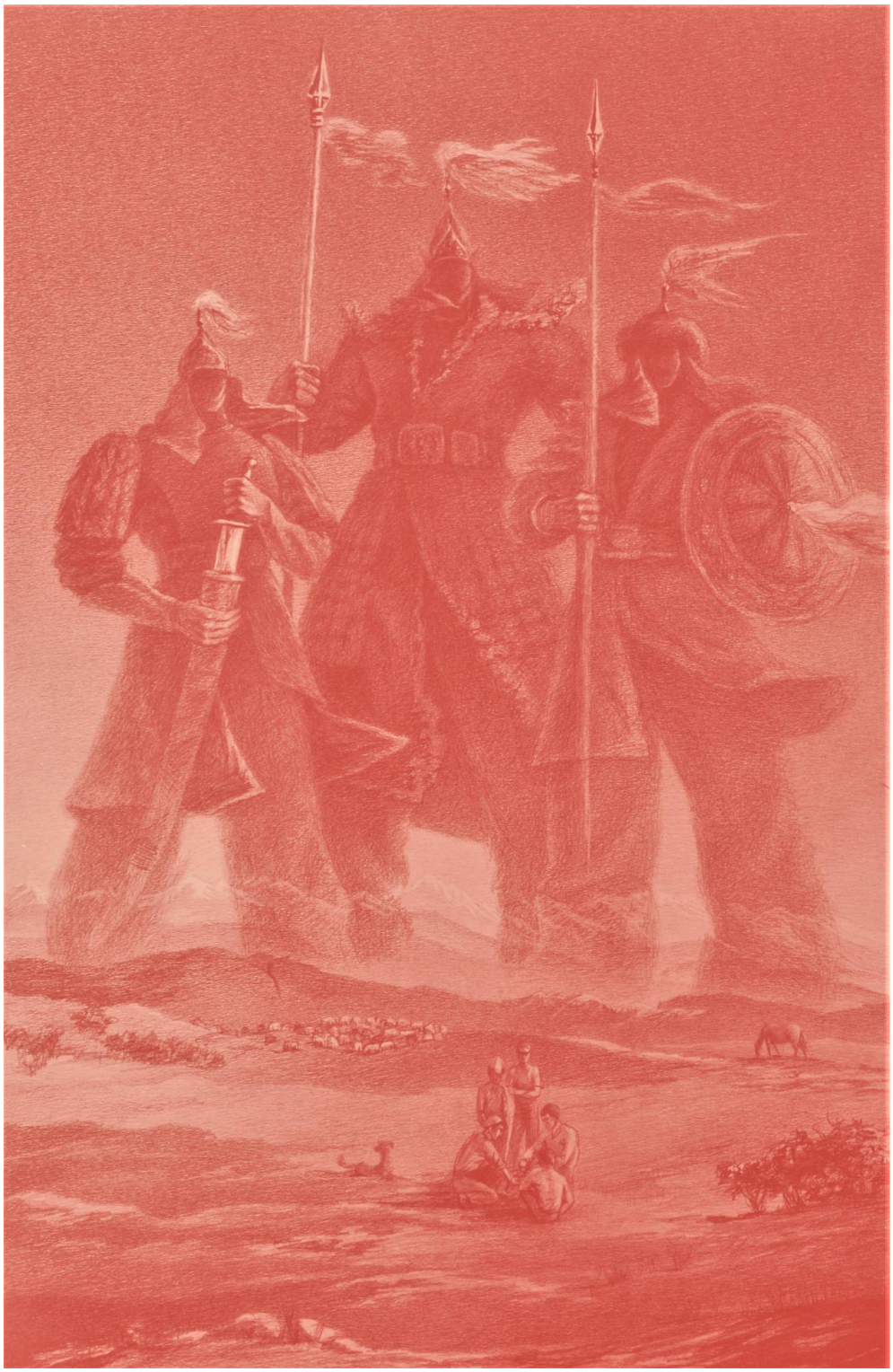
[27] Hook in the top of the loop used in the handling of the untamed horse
[28] Fine for a crime
[29] Highland pastures
[30] How Chinese scriptures called the Kyrgyz

How secretive you were with us.
Your son's true name– Manas! Manas!
He will come to this place at once
And kill your son, the biggest dunce!
Hand over now your Big Buffoon,
Or else, you'll eat the dust from us!"
Screamed angrily Kalmak Kochku.

A sudden shout: "Manas! Manas!"
A squad of forty young Kyrgyz
Formed strong a circle 'round Kochku.
He drew his sword, planned to disperse
The youngsters' circle, but alas!
A spear struck his side– by Manas!
Kochku ran off, so did his men.
Jakyp was anxious of that scene,
He nudged his son for being blind:
"All Kyrgyz clans will be exiled,
Your deeds are cause for that, Buffoon;
New feuds will start as a result!"

Akbalta could not stay aside:
"You begged God for your very son,
He gave you one– show gratitude.
And if your son is rowdy now
He will be changing over time.
Soon as we gain some strength within
We'll move back to our native lands.
Altai has fertile, richest soil,
And yet, it's alien for us.
If our Buffoon took sword and shield,
He's ready to be called Manas.
He'll shield us from all enemies,
The freedom, honor he will cause!
He'll be protector for his people!"
All men agreed with Akbalta,

Together cherishing one dream:
Returning to their native home.



Spirits of ancestors

MANAS'S VICTORY OVER THE MESSENGERS OF ESENKHAN

Back when water swallowed the world
From epic floods that spanned the earth,
in his big ark, the kindly Noah
saved all life from its cruel death.

But water did not reach Beijing,
Their land was dry, a family
Of hundreds luckily survived.
From that time to present day
The Chinese lived there and they thrived.

For many years, stretching from sea,
The Greatest Walls stood up so high.
These Chinese were ruled by Khan Esen.
In the palace there lived too
The oldest prophet of those lands,
The fates for many years to come
He could predict right off the books.

His latest vision he revealed
To Khan of the Chinese, Esen.
"In Altai, the place where live
Kalmak, Chinese, and the Burut,
A gallant batyr will be born.

On feast to celebrate his birth,
The sage will name the child Manas.
Now he's of age and congregates
The strongest vigilante squads.
He'll bring misfortunes to our lands,
for all disputes we've had in past
Burut will take his sweet revenge,
in all the battles, he will win,
He'll seize Beijing, and he'll ruin it."

And Esenkhan gave orders fast:
To find Manas! Kill him at once!
He called to arms his able men;
The head of the Kalmak, Joloy,
Went to Manas, into Altai
To capture him– that was his promise.

Young hero of Kyrgyz– Manas
Was unaware of nearing feuds.
He was amongst his forty friends,
Passing the time with his favorite game:
Hitting alchis[31] inside a circle,
Manas enjoyed this active sport.

Suddenly, out of nowhere,
A loaded camel was on spot.
Manas was up in arms for this,
He took his bat– an abalak[32],
He gave alchik the strongest hit,
It flew and broke the camel's foot.

Two hundred men who were disguised
Rushed to Manas and snatched him up.
The forty youngsters jumped on horses,
Took bats and clubs into their hands–
A fitting welcome to hostile guests.
The trained two hundred able soldiers
lay on the ground in bloody pools.

One escaped who was their leader,
Covered in blood, named Chon-Doodur.
Towards Kyrgyz by mountain path
the squad had led Joloy himself
to catch Manas there, if they couldn't,

[31] Knuckle bones from sheep, cows to play ordo
[32] A wooden bat to play ordo

He was to take his father hostage.
Jakyp heard of those intentions,
Asked his relatives' advice:
" For our safety we must give them,
Herds of our finest horses
and our daughters as their wives.
We are in dire straits right now
This is how we'll keep our lives!"

Manas then said to his own father:
" No, we will not be yielding!
Father, please don't be afraid!
We put our own lives at stake!
And when Joloy comes with his army,
we'll give him a worthy jolt!"

Joloy arrived to Altaian land
and he set up his own camps.
Thinking to avoid a bloody battle
Joloy asked Manas to kneel.

Manas himself came to meet him:
"In er-sayish– compete with me.
If I'm defeated and fall from horse,
Take me as prisoner, you will!
But if I take you off the horse
I will kill you with no remorse!"
And Khan Joloy burst out in laughter,
Hearing this from young Manas.
He called Zor-Dongo from his squad
"Go to maidan and win the fight."
A wry grin spread across his face–
Zor-Dongo was the surest bet.
His mere presence frightened all:
A steely helmet, massive shield
His spear was thicker than a log.

His horse’s footsteps shook the ground
Young Er-Manas did not flinch once
Like an arrow he rushed to his foe
And threw his spear with steady hand
It punched a hole in Dongo’s neck.

“Kakan!” Joloy called another knight,
The rival’s army all as one
Rushed to Manas to seize him alive.
But forty youngsters were on watch:
With cries:” Manas! Hurray, Manas!”
Like tigers, they stormed into battle.

Joloy Khan raised shield and spear
to stop his people from the fray.
He understood: they lacked the strength,
they couldn't keep all the Kyrgyz at bay,
they have their protector– Manas,
Able to give a worthy fight.
Joloy ordered to retreat.

THE ATTACK OF NESKARA

The ruler of Manchu Chinese–
Young, impudent Neskara–
At nearly twenty years of age
was always happy with himself.

He was aware of Burut tribes,
Of their escape from native lands.
They had their dwellings in Altai
And struck it rich in such short time
With cattle, horses, precious metals.

His oracle's words were such:
“They’ll have a daunting young batyr,
He will man up and just get stronger.
As soon as he peaks in power,
He’ll cause the end of days for us.

Manas has yet to seize his strength,
He's thirteen now, we should not wait
until he has the chance to grow
The Kyrgyz clans must to be defeated–
Take him alive, take all they have.
As Manas turns into a young man,
He will be warring with us,
He'll ruin and destroy us all!”
He gave the charges to the troops.
Armed to the teeth, his warriors went
To fight Kyrgyz into Altai.

Through long passage, thorny paths,
To the Mongolian steppes they came.
In Ken-Aral the ruler was
Batyr by name of Jaisan Khan.

And Neskara explained to him:
“I'm going to war with Manas.
Let's join troops– an easy win!
We can divide the cattle, horses,
Take their daughters as new wives,
Turn their sons into our slaves.”
But Mongol Khan had to refuse:
Jaisan was friends with the Kyrgyz.

Mongols– the dwellers of the steppes,
Grazed their cattle and horses.
Each clan was out there on their own,
there was a land of each– aimak[33].
Jaisan could not unite his clans.
Neskara's vanity became
the cause of all his biggest snags:
His troops went wild in the steppes,
Rampage and robbery took place,
a bloody toi arranged that vex.

They drank kymyz till they were drunk,
And having slaughtered the fattest mares,
They fire danced and showed their spunk.
In unjust battle, Jaisan Khan
was wounded and put in zindan[34],
He did not favor treason, lies
and valued honor more than life.

Kazakh Altaian, Aidar Khan,
Had learned about the Chinese troops
And of their mission to kill Manas.
He called his son, Kokche, and said:
“Kyrgyz-Kazakh are natal kin–
We should unite all of our tribes.

[33] Region
[34] Prison

Take our strongest men and horses,
Haste to Manas, let him know!”
Kokcho, sixteen years of age,
Was the bravest warrior around.
He brought a squad of splendid fighters,

To Er-Manas, and beared his likeness.
It was as if they were the twins:
The only difference: one was Kyrgyz,
And the other was Kazakh, and so
they were in tears, by blood they swore
to keep the tie of brotherhood
and never part from common lore.

Contented was our Er-Manas:
The visit of the brave Kokche
Had brought a hefty force along,
To acknowledge Neskara's squad,
Who were not children like his team
But two great armies joined as one
Forced him to flee, his plan deterred.

Manas rushed right after him,
the horse of the Chinese was fast,
it saved the owner from his death,
This winged stallion Chabdar-at.

Manas returned to abandoned troops
who felt the fear of captured men,
Their leader gone, which meant for them
They’d be the slaves for Kyrgyz clans.
“My friends!”- exclaimed Manas, you're free
“You can go home, but if you stay,
We’ll give you horses and a sword,
We’ll stand together and defend
our freedom, homeland, and our honor!”

Former foes turned into friends,
As equal brothers they embraced.
Manas, young leader of Burut tribes
Gained reputation for being kind.
His fame preceded him everywhere,
Magnanimous, he was defined.

Oppressed, offended by other tribes,
To his merciful hands, their fates consigned.
One day his warriors decided,
To pass the time in joyful manner.
Showing their skills to one another,
Chased wild boars, goats, and argali.
They let their birds of prey fly high,
and zeroed in on foxes, wolves;
Competitive, they were in hunt,
Er-sayish, and the art of shooting.
The oldest one, named Kutubai,
Who was the age of twenty-five,
was funny, sharp-tongued in his speech.

He gathered the batyrs in a circle
On Er-Manas, he played a joke:
“To keep an order amongst us,
Akim[35] – a khan – we need to choose.

He must be strong, swift as the wind,
And eloquent, with generous heart
Not yet attached, and firm-opined,
One who wants to be a khan.
A beshbarmak he'll cook for us
from his beloved argymak[36]!”
The test was on, he winked to some.

[35] Ruler
[36] Stallion, fast horse

Even the most ambitious one
Would not fall for this stupid trick.
As all have known– for each Kyrgyz
His argymak is more than sidekick.
“What is your answer, Er-Manas?
You are the bravest amongst us,
the youngest, with the biggest mettle.

Give your horse for beshbarmak,
Into a Khan you’ll turn for the aimak!
But if you’re greedy, Er-Manas,
We’ll find another Khan for us.
Give us your answer, quickly now!”
Said that shrewd batyr Kutubai.

And in response, Manas said this:
“We gathered here as true jigits[37]!
We wear men’s pants, if you prefer
To just behave like women do
When they're pregnant and craving meat,
I’ll sacrifice my horse for you
And walk the Earth on my two feet!”
The young batyr threw them the chylbyr[38] –
The leash to hold his argymak.

Everyone broke out in a laughter,
And Kutubai embraced Manas:
“My brother, calm your anger, please,
Come now, forgive us and our tease!
You are the youngest, yet destined Khan:
We were just testing one more thing:

If you are like your greedy father!
And we decided to play a joke:

[37] Young men
[38] Bridles

You've got no greed in you at all,
God was our witness in that test!

A true Khan you will be for all
The Kyrgyz tribes in righteous quest!
The time will come– you'll see yourself,
You should get used to hold big power!"
The forty friends took young Manas
Sat him on a used terdik[39],
Lifted him up above their heads
And placed him on a golden stone
So large in size, as if a throne.

Young Manas

[39] Rug

THE ELECTION OF MANAS KHAN

From the herd led by Aymanboz,
A statuesque, enduring stallion,
They sacrificed nine mares for slaughter.
A few dozen hearths were dug,
The people boiled meat in the kazans[40],
And Kyrgyz tribes from all four corners
Gathered in Altai again.

Wise Akbalta created census
For the coming Kyrgyz tribes.
A hundred thousand guests arrived,
Into the highlands of Altai.

“From corners of our native land
We all came here, to Altai,
through our hard work we acquired
Wealth and livestock of today.
This land is alien for us,
we could be ruined anytime.
Our wealth, gained from an honest work,
Makes enemies turn green with envy;
Human nature makes them smirk.
And therefore, our Kyrgyz clans,
Reside here with a constant angst.
Manas, together with his squad,
Has banished Neskara, Joloy,
Which turned China into a foe.
For our people’s safety and good,
We need to choose our own akim.”

The witty Kutubai then stood,
He told the people, jokingly

[40] Cast iron cauldron

That on the hunt, up in the mountains,
They elected Er-Manas
He called the people gathered there
To repeat that choice for all to see.
Manas objected truthfully:
“Up in the mountain hunt we were
Just making jokes amongst ourselves.
As Khan you chose me, yet that was
Merely a game and I propose
Our brave Kokcho as our real Khan!”
“I thank you, brother!” said Kokcho,

“My shoulder will be shielding yours,
Always ready, my dear Manas,
To stand in fight right next to you!
Many batyrs deserve the honor,
But truest Khan is one Manas!

Here, in Altai, we work together–
Kazakh, Mongol, Kalmak, Kyrgyz,
Turut, Kangai join in ties–
Mixed children show the strongest bonds.
To keep a harmony and peace,
The ruler has to be judicious,
Yet, I lack such traits, alas!”
He spoke with the sincerest heart.

Akbalta had to interfere.
With wise advice he hit the mark
“To be the Khan he is too young,
His father’s too old for that role.
But Bai Jakyp is very rich!
That honor is shared with his son,
so, we will choose the father khan,
and with his batyr son he'll share–
The two of them will rule as one!

Jakyp protested, no one cared.
Jakyp, Manas sat on kiyiz
Under sounds of dobulbas.
Launching the banner of Nogoy
they carried both over their heads.

Kyrgyz, Kalmak, Mongol, and Kazakh–
Soon as they passed the seven steps,
Jakyp asked his people this:
"Thank you, dear friends, you honor me.
But let the one and only khan
Be my dear son – tentek[41] Manas!"

And so, Manas was raised above
Over their heads, around the yurts,
they went around them seven times.
A big tebetei of musteline fur
with purple velvet on its top,
Embroidered too with golden threads,
with haste they put upon his head.

"You are the Khan, batyr Manas!
We have our unity, at last!
And let the people have some peace–
Tengir will favor you steadfast!"
Old men gave blessings to their khan!

[41] Rambunctious (Kyrgyz)

Khan Manas

MANAS MEETS KOSHOY AND BAKAI

As soon as the toi had ended,
Akbalta asked Manas to talk.
“When we were faced to leave our land,
Came to a different world– Altai,
Few Kyrgyz tribes were left behind,
Stayed regardless of great fights.
Those who were not able to flee
Had cruel days and horrid nights.

The mighty khan clan Katagan,
Fighting the raids of the invaders
Stands alone in native land.
The valley river of Big Kemin
Has one more Kyrgyz family
Governed and led by Khan Urbu.

When Alooke came in with troops,
He ordered every bridge to hew;
That wise decision saved his group.
Go to our native lands, Manas,
You need to know of your own blood.
Wait in Ala-Too for us.

When we leave this foreign land,
To go back to our roots again
We will join forces and unite
And will restore our former glory.
We will protect our native land–
Lead peaceful lives for years ahead!”
Wise elder gave his counsel plan.

Manas Khan was in agreement,
and was supported by his clan.
A long journey awaited them,

of mountain trails and empty steppes,
of valleys, pastures and prairies.
They rode forth so many nights,
Exhausted horses more than knights,
They passed the cities, people, sights,
Forty-five days with no stops,
The lakes, the mountains, rivers, seas.
And finally, they reached their goal–
Snow-covered valleys of Ala-Too.

And everyone was overwhelmed
By native land's beautiful views.
They crossed the mountain pass by dawn,
Came to the valley Karkyra,
Where grass grew taller than a man,
Whole valleys blossomed with eyebright.

The rain worms were gargantuan,
The burdock stalks like human thighs.
Unguarded herds grazed on the pastures,
Argali, hinds, and goats roamed free,
As if not noticing the people,
Living there for all to see.

From the peaks of Chech-Dobo,
One sees the entire valley’s charm.
And like a marvel of the world,
Down here on Earth, the Yssyk-Kol
Flowed with blue clear as the sky.

Most likely, God Koke-Tengir,
Had welled up tears within his eye,
And drop by drop, in palm of hand,
He gave the Kyrgyz from up high.
And further down there were the camps
Of Katagan nomadic clans.

Ruled by the wise man Khan Koshoy.
Manas sent a messenger ahead,
To announce the news of coming guests.
The joyous Khan could not hold tears,

And asked the messenger's attest.

Koshoy himself came out to meet:
"Manas, my dearest son! I'm pleased
to hear of your intrepid deeds,
that you, together with your squad
Gave Neskara, Joloy their meeds.
And is Jakyp alive and well?
How about my friend 'Balta?
What of my family and friends?"

"Yes, they're alive! And all their greetings
they've sent with me to convey.
We're strong again and live united,
But I came to Ala-Too with a task
To learn about the Kyrgyz clan,
Ruled by our elder– Khan Koshoy!"
Manas replied to the wise old man.

"Back when the Manchu invaded,
Enclaved us all with hopes to kill,
I fought with all the might I had
And took my clan to the highland gorge.
But every summer and the spring,
Manchu raids come with stronger force.

The day and night, in cold, in heat
My men keep constant vigil still,
Ready to fight till death with them!
I'm happy, Er-Manas, and glad
that now the brave batyr with us
Prepares to unite us all

And form in native land Talas
United Kyrgyz Kaganate.
To lead our people from Altai!
We have been waiting for so long,
For our people to return!
I am afraid of only this:
If enemies learn you are here,
They will arrange a rash onslaught
On those you left without your care.
Return and bring them safe and sound!"
The wise Koshoy thus counseled them.
The squad was generously treated,
Given blessings to avert mayhem.

Manas together with his team
Had passed the main part of their journey.
When they encountered there a squad,
Manas asked of them: "Who are you?"

"We're Kyrgyz!"- They replied to him.
"I am bai's son, by name Bakai,
This is my team, the toughest fighters,
And we're heading to Manas,
My brother, in the Altai highlands."
This was their leader's laconic answer.

"Greetings to you, Bakai, an honor!
I am your brother named Manas!"
A friendly laughter bursted out,
the brothers both embraced each other,
swearing friendship till their death.
As brothers they returned together,
To their home of Altai.

Fresh faces greeted them with joy,
All armored, trained with spears in hands,

Two thousand men on the fastest horses
From all the corners of the earth–
They gave their pledge to Er- Manas.

And Khan Manas was very happy–
From now on under his hand,
the forty men whom he once had,
Became thousands-strong army,
Ready to free all clans nomad!
Manas gathered them in the valley
an uplifting speech he had:
“My friends and brothers!
My dear people!

Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Kypchak, Oirot,
Residing here on a foreign land!
You have acquired goods and cattle,
Aggression comes from every corner
To seize your herds, kill you in battle!

Manchu will not give rest for those
who want to lead a peaceful life.
The only salvation we have
Is leaving this foreign Altai
To return to our Fatherland!

So many people came together,
We have the power to go back
To the land of ours– with honor!
How can we put up with the fact
that our native Turkestan,
The sacred mountains Ala-Too,
The valleys, rivers, and jailoo,
Our Issyk-Kol, this paradise
Allah himself gave the Kyrgyz–
Right now are in a villain’s hands?

Our filial duty is as such:
Release our fatherland from strangers
Regardless if we live or die!
And if we fail this goal to reach
This sacred duty of our fate,
our ancestor’s spirits will not forgive.
Our punishment on Earth will be brutal
And send us into a black hole!”
With his response there struck a thunder,
under the skies a loud” Hurray!”"

MANAS' CAMPAIGN AND VICTORY OVER TEKES-KHAN

Two months passed since the assembly,
that time was used to train the sons,
Equip the fighters with their weapons,
Get them ready for campaigns.

The noble warriors by birth,
Gathered here to pledge Manas.
The whole valley was occupied,
The earth shuddered from hordes of horses.
The spears formed from the thickest forest
All glimmered with a steely blue.

Poles of green holding red banners
Flew over their heads anew.
Under this banner, Khan Nogoy
Had led his troops to bloody feuds.

Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Kypchak, Noygut,
Prepared for their long journey
Soon to their native Turkestan.
The whole area of Uch-Turfan
Was under the rule of Tekes Khan;
He was the Khan of the Kalmak.

And when the news came from Altai,
Telling how the tribes Burut
Got into war with Turkestan,
Tekes Khan put all his efforts
To strengthen borders of Kara-Suu.
Manas had gone to Uch-Turfan,
His scouts there shared the outline too.

The stone wall fenced in the city
On which the vigil guards aligned.

They came to Manas with advice:
“Ajibai, Tazbaimat, Kutubai,
Karatoko, Majik, Chalik,
And respected elder Aidarkhan:
How to cut our losses on the road,
To bypass the city with no blood?”
This thought outraged the Er-Manas:
“You want retreat?!” he said in rage.
“What if Tekes will chase us down?
Will you flee then? Will you escape?
Or maybe just like badgers do,
under the ground you’ll hide your nose?
Or up you’ll fly just like the birds?
The path we have, my friends, is one–
Go forward, fight, and then advance,
Destroy invaders and release
The land of ours– this Turkestan.
Such order is by grace of God!”

Bakai then offered to proceed:
“I’ll go ahead to reach the gates,
As soon as they see me, I’ll turn,
And when Tekes will try to chase,
You all confront him and destroy!”

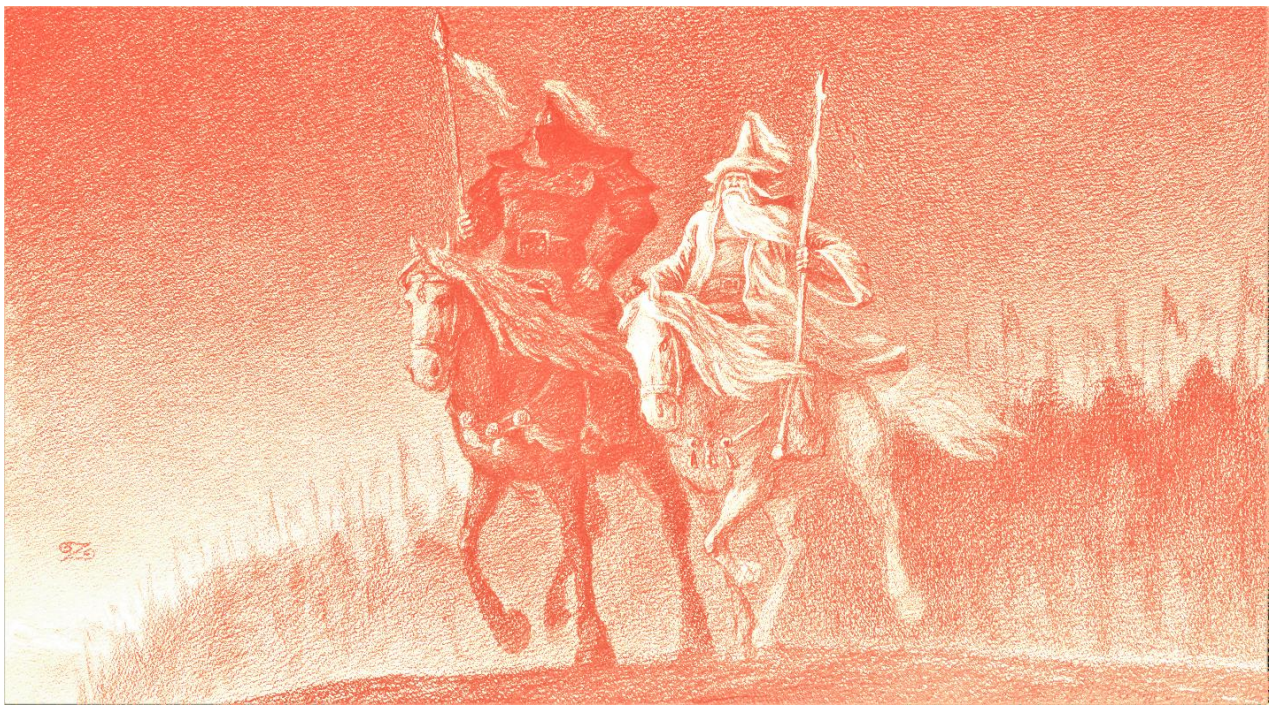
Bakai with squad came to the wall,
A team of guards to them stepped forward
With swords and spears in their hands.
But for some reason all of them
Just stood there silent with no thought,
As if they took a mouthful of water,
No arrow movement, spears, or darts,
Just pillars in the ground, they stared!
Er-Bakai deciphered quick,
This was a trick and all facade.
He turned his squad around and charged–

Manas's army had arrived,
Burned bushes, empty mannequins.
Without a battle, blood, or loss,
The city's gates to them unfolded.
Such outcome was not expected,
Tekes took a dagger, stabbed his own chest.

The Kyrgyz took the Kara-Suu city,
Came to the palace– a khan with quest.
Manas called in his troops for counsel,
Ordered them in the strictest manner
Not to offend the women, youngsters,
Or any common folk around.

Another stern rule he enforced:
"Do not take from the captured.
The ones committing robbery
will get the axe, with final wishes.
I've forgiven Tekes's wrongs,
The khan of yours took his own life
So only God can free him now!
My friends, you're free to choose your own khan!

The only thing I'll ask of you:
To love your people, take good care,
To be our truest friend from now,
And cherish children from each tribe.
We're bound by one shared destiny–
we're not each other's enemy!"
Manas Khan told the captured people,
who were so happy with his speech.
They chose themselves a new khan– Teyish,
Younger brother of Tekes.
Manas shook Teyish's hand,
as friends he hugged him by the shoulder
And victorious toi began.



Manas with Koshoy

MANAS' LOVE FOR KYZ-SAIKAL

In Uch-Turfan lived Karacha–
A famous Kalmak aksakal[42].
The old man was a proud father
of a beautiful daughter– Kyz-Saikal.
The fact that she was a pretty girl,
nobody knew in Uch-Turfan.

Hiding her hair under a helmet
she was like a real, brave jigit,
she carried sword, a spear, a shield.
When Tekes had killed himself,
and they elected Khan Teyish,
Saikal in battle armor came
and to her father shared a wish:
"For honor of our native land,
I'm proud to give up my own life!

The young Manas has to accept,
my challenge, battle– er-sayish!
I'll kill him, then all Burut
Will leave our city Uch-Turfan!"
Turfan had a week of feasts,
after the races- alaman[43] ceased;
Baige was given for the horses.
In wrestling matches they competed,
Grabbing each other by the pants,
The kuroshchu- strong wrestlers fought.
And then they announced er-sayish:
Batyr, who knocked the other off
From saddle with the hit of spear,
Received baige[44] of three hundred horses,

[42] A respected elder (Kyrgyz)
[43] Horse races
[44] A prize for a winner

On top of that he took away
the horse of the defeated one.

The first at the maidan[45] appeared,
Kalmak batyr by name Saikal.
The herald, riding 'round the circle,
to fight with him on spears he called.
He announced in different tongues
yet none from the batyrs came forward
To fight Saikal in er-sayish.

Formidable was young Saikal:
Repeated wins in er-sayish
Had demonstrated this batyr.
Annoyed by lack of an opponent,
Saikal took her helmet off–
The people were amazed by the sight
Of her long hair, as black as silk,
All flowing loose over the shoulders.
The silence of the wonder reigned
Over the public for a while.
What a beautiful young face!

Shaking heavens, mountains, valleys
and the forests, so it rang–
The voice of hers had mighty force!
All stepped forward to er-sayish,
Jigits with thoughts of easy wins
To knock a girl right off her saddle,
Any can do, all with a grin.

“I’m Kyz-Saikal, Karach’s daughter!
I’m warning all of you today:
To the maidan I came with spear

[45] A front, battlefield

Return the honor to my clan!
Manas! It's you I came to slay!
If I am the one to knock you down,
I will not take a horse from you,
You'll need to leave our Uch-Turfan
And swear never to return!
And if you win and knock me down,
Please, take my horse and me as slave,
It's up to you, in front of the people,
You're free to execute me then!"
"I do agree with you, biykech[46]!
This er-sayish comes with a warning:
For me, the prize of kyz-kuumai[47] -
If I displace you from your saddle–
You'll have to give your cheek to kiss!"
Answered the girl, hearty Manas.

Courageous maiden Kyz-Saikal
Was full of beauty and of grace.
Her eyes were shiny diamonds,
And scarlet lips graced her fair face,
Made young Manas feel tender love
For the Kalmak girl instantly.

He thought: "She'll be a worthy wife."
Great caution took Manas with her,
Avoiding body, hitting shield,
He aimed to move her from the saddle
Without blood, just off the field,
And then, as promised right before,
To kiss the girl would be his yield.

[46] Young girl, a maiden (Kyrgyz)
[47] A traditional horse racing game, where young man chases after a maiden, if he catches up, he gets to kiss her on a cheek

When his campaign came to end,
He'd send his father to ask her hand.
The gullible Manas did not think
the pretty maiden young Saikal
had real thoughts of killing him.
She sowed panic and fear among his ranks,
the sun's light, as planned, bedimmed.
Returned the hit, Saikal-Kyz, to him,
Caused unexpected loss of spear.
Another hit into his chest–
Nearly fell from horse, Manas.
Saikal struck with spear and then,
To the left of his own shield,
The sharpness of the steely spear
Nearly missed Manas's heart.
It was so clear to Er-Manas:
The game on spears of er-sayish
Saikal decided to transform
into a bloody struggle for power.
The girl with whom he fell in love,
Manas decided to devour.

Now, as the fiercest enemies,
they charged to hit at fullest speed,
Exchanging strikes, both fought to death!
The open wounds seeped with blood,
His right arm was growing weak.
A hit! A hit! Another one!
His shield reliably protected.
He gasped, fatigued with hurried breathing,
Fell in and out of consciousness.
PCollecting all his will and vehemence,
He struck his spear straight in her shield
And knocked down Saikal-Kyz.
When Manas had his approach,
She bent her head, gave up her spear,

Handed the bridle for her horse.
Manas in anger drew his sword,
Preparing for the morbid task,
He took the girl's chin, but he caught
A proud, bold look from Saikal-Kyz
Expressing neither fear nor anger
One last glance upon the sun,
Saikal bowed down ready to die,
Her braids, pitch black, came all apart
Hair fell to shoulders, bared her neck.

Manas withdrew his sword and lowered
To Kyz-Saikal, kissed her neck,
Sprung on his horse, and rode away.
She watched him; tears rolled down her cheeks.
“I’ll wait for you for my whole life,”
Said faintly, timid Kyz-Saikal.
Her faithful oath no one could hear–
She was in love with him from there.
Manas and Khan Teyish combined
their troops, prepared for their next march
Kokche noticed, off in the distance,
Kyz-Saikal was watching them.
“Look, Er Manas, it’s your Saikal!
I gather, she is offended now.
You did not make a wife from her!”
“My dear brother Er-Kokche,
I swear, I will return to her
As soon as I have victory!
We have a duty to fulfill,
To bring peace to the tribes on earth,
And only then, for the rest of time,
Saikal will stay with me as wife.”
Replied Manas with tears in eyes.

Her whole life Saikal had waited
For Er-Manas to claim her hand.
So many suitors asked her since,
All were refused without comment.
Manas could not return to her:
The feud of tribes, between the people
to that day had not quite eased still.
The land was yet to find that peace–
This world imbued with enmity!
In dreams, Manas and Kyz-Syakal
could tie the knot– nike[48], they say.
And when to war, Manas would leave
to protect his people from invaders,
to take the city of Chet-Beijing,
with mortal wound, return alone,
His home, to his beloved Talas,

She would not stay by herself
On earth, where he no longer lives,
His faithful bride, Saikal, he'd call,
at his last hour to a better place.
And quietly, so no one knew,
the girl Saikal closed her eyes.

The maiden’s soul soared up to heavens,
Manas waited for her there.
A tale a thousand years ago
Of how in battle fell in love
A Kalmak girl with Kyrgyz-Burut.
Descendants do not wish let go–
Such love deserves to always live on.

[48] Wedding ceremony

Kyz-Saykal

LIBERATION OF TURKESTAN FROM THE CHINESE INVADERS CHUY VALLEY BATTLE

Along the valleys, mountains, meadows
under the heavens of the native land
on three roads along the steppes,
as three seething rivers walked
The Kyrgyz from faraway Altai.

The warriors wailed on their kernei[49],
Shreiked loudly the high-pitched surnai[50].
Like thunder, as a voice of heavens,
the marching dobulbas[51] was banged.

Under a red banner in front
Manas together with entourage,
Right after him carried their banners,
Kazakh, Kokche, Noigut, Chubak–
Whose mother is Altai Kalmak,
And Khan Eshtek of tribes Bulgar.

Urbu came with ten thousand soldiers,
Jamgyrchy came as a friend,
the brave Kangai Keldik with them,
Khan Jai-San from the Mongols,
And Berdike, Karakalpak.
The troops of tribes– Naiman, Duulat,
Kara-Bagysh, and Kalmurat–
An endless army came along.

They all joined forces with Manas,
They wished return of Turkestan,
And out they went with thoughts of chasing

[49] A Kyrgyz wind musical instrument
[50] A Kyrgyz wind musical instrument
[51] Drums

Chinese invaders from their land.
The warriors were a match for each other,
The legion of the true batyrs
Wading through the River Ili,
Came to valley Karkyra.
The rivers Tup and Jergalan,
The army crossed along as well,
And after they passed Lake Yssyk Kul,
The gorge Boom they approached;
They saw four different roads in front.

Wise man Koshoy gave his advice:
-"Manas, I know this land of ours."
The mouth of that small river
has only one way to exit
and if we go through it right now,
we'll rush in on the biggest raid.
I'm sure, the cunning Akbeshim
An ambush has prepared for us.
We have to alternate our path
and go on steeps and ridges now."

The batyrs passed the gorge on both sides,
moved along the ravine, Boom.
As they reached the mountain peaks,
The smell of flowers was so sweet,
This picture was from a fairytale.

The blessed land was tortured long
By the Manchu Chinese, Kalmak.
The ruler of the valley Chu,
Satrap Chinese Akbeshim,
Had learned that Khan Manas approached
From far Altai with his campaign,
Directing his grand army
He put guards along the river banks–

Kemin and Chu with bows and arrows,
His squad blocked a narrow ravine,
Boom, on the foothills of Ala-Too,
The troop was ready for an order.
Manas saw this, gave command.
The human avalanche of batyrs
Rushed en masse to battle downhill.
Both sides collided in the valley,
And a fierce battle began.

The spears and shields broke on their im-pact,
Daggers, swords all shone in action.
Bloodshed turned to running rivers;
Screaming, yelling, moans of death
Took equal place among the men.

The anger! Curses! Threats all ‘round!
Without hands, no legs, no head,
Lifeless bodies of warriors lay.
With his red banner Akbeshim,
Came forward ready for the battle,
But Er-Kokche and Khan Urby
surrounded him into the ring;
They served a cruel end for him.
Khan's banner fell onto the ground–
The fierce enemy defeated.

Next morning was a gloomy one–
The valley Chui completely covered
with corpses on each side of battle,
both armies lost their bravest sons.

They collected those who fell,
And lit bonfire in the mountains,
Gave the bodies to the fire.
Ashes they let down the stream,

A place where all lived as one kin,
From start of days– Kazakh, Kyrgyz.

Past centuries before us lived
Descendants of Khan Karahan,
His famous son had ruled these lands,
Then great-grandson Khan Alashkan.
Native for the Turkic sons,
the fertile land of Turkestan.
All people know that by their hands,
By Turkic tribes that came together
Built the city of Tashkent–
Which means 'a fortress out of stones'.

Two hundred years this city was
Under the grip of Chinese hands,
And there, behind the stony walls,
The people were governed by Kangai Panus.
And when Manas in valley Chuy
Defeated Manchu Akbeshim,
The messenger rushed to Tashkent,
But as he saw the gruesome scenes
He encountered in the valley,
His body shook, could barely speak,
His voice trembled in fear and panic:

“An avalanche of living people–
Not seen before this time!
No one has seen such mighty horde!
On our Tashkent they soon will storm!
We need a big army to curb them,
Or else we lose this Turkestan
And our power will come to end!”
The poor messenger expelled.

MANAS TOGETHER WITH KOKETEY DEFEAT PANUS

The Khan Panus called to Tashkent
the rulers named Merghim, Merke,
Shamyn-Shaa, and Doobogo–
“Under their heels we suffer then,
all our land– Chuy, Turkestan.”
Panus prepared his troops for march,
He led them to the valley Chu.

He planned on killing in the battle
All Kyrgyz troops, take the valley,
Banish Manas to Altai.
The valley foothills named Chirchik
Were owned by the rich Koketey.

He was well-known in those lands
As having wisdom and the brains.
This well-respected old man could
Find common tongue with anyone.
From mighty Esenhan himself
He had received the Chinese rank.
No one could start a fight with him,
He gave no reason to begin.
Khan Koketey received the word,
Er-Manas stepped on native land
and caused a rout for the Chinese,
Panus with army left Tashkent
To curb Manas and put an end.

Rich Koketey came to the decision
To give Manas all his support,
As one united army, stand
Against invaders from Turan,
Evict them for the rest of time!

Leaving his beloved Chirchik
to Er-Manas, moved Koketey.
Along the banks of River Chui,
The enemies stood face to face.

Three days, three nights the fight went on
Chui valley was in blood again,
like a downpour, it covered land.
The fight was of unequal forces;
on the fourth day of the war,
Panus surrounded Manas' army,
locked them in a ring of swords.

God knows what could have happened there
if Koketey's army never came
From the Steppes and hit their rear.
Panus Khan was defeated then!

Khan Koketey and Khan Manas agreed,
To join armies and fight as one:
One– a respected aksakal,
Another– a young man, jigit.

Over Tashkent was raised again
the green banners of Turkestan.
It took two hundred years of time
For Turkic sons to come back home
Manas and old wise Koketey
Best friends became, like father and son,
all of their lives until their last days.

Khan of Tashkent, now Koketey,
Sent back Manas along with troops.
He asked his friend and newfound son:
"Bring back our people from Altai,
And form united Turkestan".

Kyrgyz landscape

RETURN OF THE KYRGYZ TO THEIR HOMELAND

Under their ancestral banners
The Kyrgyz left the Altai highlands
And began a lengthy journey
to the promised land of their forefathers.

Each of them desired the same:
Rush back to snowy Ala-Too,
Where through the years Kyrgyz were slain
And blood was drained from navel cords.

They crossed with their possessions
Through stormy Ili River streams,
Swimming, wading with distress,
through mountain heights, with great fatigue,
they went to valley Uch-Aral,
through rivers Konuz and Zhergalan,
They reached the valley Sary-Ozon,
Through slopes where grew a tender grass.

The downhill was with flowers sewn,
Without a hint of dust disturbed,
The foliage twittering in the wind,
The mountain rill's amazing chirps,
The lakes, the rivers, ponds abundant,
Ashen mountains, woods and meadows,
Bluest skies— a glimpse from heavens!

This wonderful, blessed land–
Creator gave the Kyrgyz this land!
The children all ran barefoot through
On the refreshing morning dew,
Young girls, with joyous noise so grand,
Bathing in rivers, waterfalls.

Batyrs on native land at last,
under the stars, at night by fire
all snored as one till morning light.
No soul around! Just native skies!
And peace amongst the paradise!
Old wise Koshoy came with his squad
To meet Manas and his dear tribe.
“I am glad this hour has arrived
I see my people in one piece!
You’ve wandered long on foreign lands,
Each tribe returned to native grounds.

We have to keep and worship now
Our unity, stand all as one.
But if each tribe goes by itself,
The enemy again will come
Destroy with ease each single tribe.

Again, a bitter fate we'll know.
So we, the people, stand as whole,
One Khan must rule us all alone!
You proved by actions, Er-Manas,
That you are wise beyond your age,
Both lion heart and judicious sage!
There, beyond the golden valley,
two rivers run: Ken-Kol, Talas–
Go build your own city out there,
And place your throne upon the soil.

Clan Katagan I will defend
As well the land we stand on here.
Keep in touch with me, Manas!”
Wise counsel gave Uncle Koshoy.
Then Akbalta took on the turn,
Supporting words of wise Koshoy

“Your destiny Er-Manas
Is to liberate all Kyrgyz.
For us, you are a shield and sword.
To give support for you I must
stay in the valley and be its ward.
And if the enemy attacks,
I’ll call for you to come with hordes.”
Three patriarchs– Koshoy, Zhakyp
And Akbalta all wished farewell
With tears they parted, each their own way.
Manas became Khan of all Khans,
And now, together with his squad
Moved towards forefather’s land– Talas.

Return to Homeland

TALE OF HOW KHAN ALOOKE, SEEING MANAS, FLED FROM FERGANA

Our blessed land of Turkestan
Was in the hands of the Chinese.
Ruled by the Khan Alooke, they were,
The valley of Fergana's people.

'The merciless', 'the vicious one',
Alooke was known to Turkic men.
Those who refused to worship him
He slaughtered like he would a ram.

The famine he brought to the Turks
With burdensome taxes and dues–
One hundred thousand bars of gold
and furs of every game accrued
Sent to the city of Margelan.

And all the young and eyeful girls
He put in harem for himself
And on each neck of Turkic sons
He put a shackle with a lock.
The people suffered, and they bled,
But were not able to change a thing.
All Kyrgyz Khans called to Talas
For counsel from their Khan Manas.

"My dear friends, I called for you,
To place your input into view!
Alooke– the Khan of Fergana,
Has sent a messenger to us
With warning words to leave this place
Or I should kneel to him– a slave.

And if object to that we dare,
He threatens to take lives, no spares.
If you are of one mind with me
We'll free the people of Fergana!
We have returned not for the purpose
Of finding Chinese shoes to lick!"
"Manas, we are prepared to defend–
For Turkestan, for our homeland,
We'll go to war with you ahead!
We all share this one goal, the task:
To free our land from enemies!"
Said the son of Akbalta– Chubak.

Manas asked men to saddle the horses.
Kernei then called out to them:
"Be ready for the war, batyrs!"
When Alooke saw the march of troops
Led by batyr, by Er-Manas,
He had a vision of a dragon
Rushing in with eyes on him,
And on the sides ran lions, tigers,
Cheetahs, bears, gray wolves by them.

Above him, spreading monstrous wings,
A mighty eagle with one claw,
Able to lift a horse with rider
And raise him up to the skies.
Old Alooke could scarcely fathom:
Manas is invincible,
And if he travels to Fergana,
All the people will follow.

And there is only one way out–
Take all the gold, flee to Beijing!
He ordered his viziers be quick
Collect his treasures, valued things,

To leave the throne and Margilan,
To leave the land of Turkestan,
And hurry back to China safe.

But Manas' team caught the caravan,
Returned the goods the Chinese took:
The gold and silver, back they gave
The concubines from Alooke's harem,
The numerous servants and slaves–
Manas declared freedom to all.
Alooke stepped from horse and bowed
into submission, he kneeled down,
Requesting mercy for his squad:
“I will not lie- I am your foe,
I took your lands, and killed its people,
Enslaved remaining Turkic sons.

Such are the laws of living things-
A fight for life! The law of war!
And in this world we either choose
To kill, or be ready to die.

I see now clearly, Khan Manas,
Your turn has come to kill us all,
I will not ask you to forgive-
Mercy for my own people I ask!

The khans are ones who start the wars,
And people, we drive in like cattle.
I swear by honor of the Khan:
They'll not return with war to you!

My own son, Booke, to you I'll give
To keep as hostage, by my word–
If promise given I will break,
You can behead him at your will.”

“From Altai highlands I came back
To get you off my ancestors’ lands
To cast you out from this time on,
If you won’t leave– destroy your people!
You are much wiser than I thought:
To spare your people from the fight
You have chose to leave this valley.
For the wisdom you showed, Alooke,
I will spare your life today!
Leave quickly– two days and a night,
I’ll give you that!” the Kyrgyz Khan replied.

“Oh, Khan Manas! Thank you!”
Said with a bow, Alooke, to him.
From golden sheath he had on side
His sword he took, gave to Manas.

His own son he gave as a hostage,
Without spilling a drop of blood,
Alooke fled to native China.
He was delighted with his fate–
He got to go back home alive!

Upon arrival to his Khanate
Into Beijing he came with squad,
His younger son, named Konurbai,
Greeted his father and the men.
Konur, seventeen years of age,
Wore military amulets.

He berated his own father,
For leaving his throne in Fergana.
“If it had been my hands at war,
I might have shown to the Kyrgyz
How on our horses we can fight!

Nomadic clans Kazakh, Burut,
Along the valleys they reside,
They never come as one big power,
In mountains scattered one by one!”

“On, my dear son, young Konurbai!
Stop your censure, I ask of you!
The free nomadic people changed–
They used to live up in the mountains,
Secluded, each clan on its own.

Manas united all the clans;
Their power is strong when standing united.
He is invincible, unyielding.
But if you are convinced, my son,
You'll beat the army of Kyrgyz–
Go to the field of war to prove!
Return me honor and my glory!”
His father’s order for the war
Remembered firmly Konurbai–
His vanity expanded that.
The Khan of the Kyrgyz, Manas,
Turned his sworn enemy that day.

Ala Too Kyrgyz mountains

THE TALE OF HOW THE AFGHAN KHAN-SHORUK WAS DEFEATED BY THE KYRGYZ

In the south, where Alai lies,
Next to the place Ooganistan[52],
Where Pushtuns live among the land,
the ruler of clan Maimunduk,
A pompous Khan by name Shoruk
Decided to curb the Kyrgyz clans
and steal their goods, their cattle, herds,
And drive them away from the mountains.

Shoruk had family and children:
Three sons, two daughters of his own.
The elder daughter Akylai was gentle,
Slender, stood out from the rest
by her intelligence and beauty.

The stature of maiden Akylai
was graceful, straight just like a dagger,
her voice was soft like mountain streams.
Her skin was smooth and fair,
As if made from white porcelain.

One morning Akylai shared
The dream she had with Khan, her father:
"From the direction of eastern stars
a flood was rushing to our dwellings.
Strong waters took me, I was gone,
No one was there to save your daughter.
Lost in the flood, my flailing hand
Found a golden chynar[53] branch.
And suddenly I saw that stream,
all mixed with snow and mud and water,

[52] Current day Afghanistan
[53] A tree that usually grows in Central Asia

Take you as well to a cruel death.
I gave you my hand and we were saved.
The people, cattle passed us by–
An avalanche of soil and stones.
I think this dream brings my solution,
The purpose of my destiny.
Please give your word to me, your daughter,
That you will not go to Alai,
The place where the Burut returned.
I fear, father, that your troops
They will defeat and all destroy;
On top of that you'll lose your throne.
Of that- my dream is warning us."

Shoruk listened to Akylai,
and gave his own thoughts on the dream:
"The vision of the mountain stream
with stones and snow and mud you've seen
Was our enemy coming to us!

My hand was holding on the branch
Of the golden tree chynar–
It means Manas' throne is mine!
My dear daughter, my prophetess,
your wit, I dare to enshrine!"
Shoruk assured his careful daughter,
And to Alai he went to war.

With tribes Noygut he won with ease,
Oshpur's troops were also defeated.
Their herd of seven thousand horses
the villain Shoruk drove away.

As soon as Manas heard the dreadful news,
that Khan Shoruk went to that land,
He gave his troops an urgent order–

To start the march and save Alai.
They overtook the Khan Shoruk,
His troops defeated by Burut.
Shoruk could hardly reach his camp,
He almost died, fighting in battle.

One thing he knew from this ordeal–
All clans Burut stood strong united,
It's useless starting war with them.
Solo for the galling task:
He picked his daughter's brain on this,
"My dear daughter, Akylai,
Please give advice, I have misjudged
Your presaging dream–
Please save us!
Like the strongest flood, Manas comes,
I saw, he's merciless in anger,
Whole families will die in fight.
To save your parents, siblings, all,
Manas you'll marry, my dear daughter."

Akylai replied to him:
"I've never met Manas before,
But if that saves us all from death,
I'll gladly sacrifice myself!
To strengthen union and kinship,
Please let me take along my sisters,
They'll start new families with them."

Shoruk then gathered his relations
Young, slender beauties he chose,
In silk and pearls, he dressed them all,
The shoes, ichik[54], he gave each one
And asked they display noble manners.

[54] Leather coat

To make them smell like desert flowers
They rubbed their bodies with fragrant herbs,
Put their hair in stunning braids.

Bread and salt were used as symbols
Of hospitality and friendship.
His life at stake, taking a risk
Shoruk took the girls to Khan Manas.

He threw around his neck kamchy[55],
a festive crown upon his head,
with his arms crossed over his chest,
Shoruk started to confess:
"Forgive me, son Manas, and your people
I should never have oppressed!
For ones I killed in the battlefield,
I'll pay kun[56] to the top of my bent!
My own daughter I brought to you,
Along with thirty other beauties!
Let us create new kinship ties,
With our daughters you will have
New sons and daughters between our clans.
Accept our gift, batyr Manas!
And bread with salt, and here is my sword!
In case you can't forgive my sins,
Give order to behead me here!"

Such beauties altogether at once,
Manas has not seen his whole life…
His face was shining like the moon,
As polished copper near the fire.

All lost, confused and quite embarrassed,
Manas whiffled like a bear.

[55] A leather whip on a wooden handle- "throwing kamchy around neck- means acknowledge one's fault"
[56] Fine for committed crime(s)

“Old friend Bakai, tell me your mind!
I’m rightful leader in the war,
But in the matters such as this
I am a fool, a straightforward bore-”
The gallant Khan affirmed his flaw.

Bakai replied: “Get up, Shoruk!”
Embraced him as his relative.
Unmarried young Kyrgyz batyrs
Showed their respect to Khan Shoruk.
The only question was of choice,
Who’s going to be his son-in-law?
“My dear beauties! Don’t hide your gaze!
Jigits are watching– look for signs
Who you will choose with your own eyes.

The young Kyrgyz would want to have
A healthy family, an eyeful wife
Able to bear the strongest sons,
Protect their land, their way of life!
I am your Khan, free will I’ll give
To choose your destiny to live!”
Said khan Shoruk to thirty beauties.

All were content with such events,
No one foresaw this turn of tables.
The single men came forward once,
To show themselves to slender beauties.
Moving tebetei’s[57] to the side, each waited
Thinking, “Who will be my wife?”
With easy steps like a mountain fawn,
Came forward maiden Akylai.

[57] A traditional fur hat

Just like a goddess, light as air
Came to Manas with tender smile.
Her timid look and modest gaze
Were signs of love to Khan Manas.

Young beauties followed her in action
And each of them chose for themselves.
The thirty young jigits at once
Created families, found their wives.
Along with them, Manas himself
Was rushed to have a wedding-toi,
The second wife turned young Akylai.

Akylai

THE TALE OF HOW MANAS, IN RESENTMENT TO HIS FATHER, LEFT THE KHAN'S THRONE AND STARTED FARMING

Our valiant hero - young Manas,
Built his khanate in scenic Talas–
A state of power he created.
All went to him to seek protection,
The bravest heroes of the time,
To serve their Khan, to serve their land,
Strengthen their state to reach its prime.

He gave each one a horse, a shield,
A place to call home, spears and swords.
The art of combat he taught them,
Arranged the races and er-sayish[58],
Baiges[59] he gave with a generous hand–
It was a peaceful time for change.

The endless pastures, cattle growing
On their own, without much effort.
The only care of their concern:
Drink, eat, and then go for walks,
At night, just gazing at the sky,
Count all the stars, and watch nighthawks.

The idle life suits no Kyrgyz!
Jakyp would have none of this–
He’s used to fight for life, for bread.
What did he save and suffer for?
“Why long for an heir to fill my shoes?
All fun and games and kymyz[60] for him;
Hunting, racing, beshbarmak[61]!

[58] Jousting match
[59] Prizes fro winners
[60] Fermented mare’s milk
[61] A Kyrgyz dish of meat and square-cut noodles

My broken back in righteous work
My son has little value for!
Manas will blow away too fast!

I did not know, an old poor fool,
That things would take such idle paths,
And my own son, even a Khan
Could squander everything like a goof!"
The frugal man was angry now,
The father grumbled to his squad:
"None objected to this brawl.
None of you need me anymore!
When there was hunger, poverty,
I was like water to you all!
And now you're full, no need for me,
I'm not an equal to your rows!"
Manas decided in resentment:
"I'll be a wanderer for now,
I'll see my lands and all the people–
Maybe refuge I will find.
I will forget the battles, wars,
And lead a peaceful life ahead,"

At night, so that no one knew,
He left his throne, beloved Talas.
Passed Besh-Buka, walked through Jaik,
and in the region of Andijan,
among the fields, the gardens, meadows,
He met an old man with silver hair.

"The name I have– Baba-dyikan,
It means I'm father to the farmers.
I recognize you, Khan Manas!
You saved your people from their death,
you brought them freedom and true peace.

My dear son, come with me now.
Remember, Alooke once told you
That a survivor is the one
Who kills and takes away from all.
But there's another way to wealth–
Become a laborer through daily work!

And true sons of God can have
All of the wealth without the wars,"
The old man told young Manas.
Two oxen and one plow
He gave to him to sow and toil.
Began to till, our Er-Manas,
Into the belly of the soil
Handfuls of seeds of grain he planted.
Almighty God Koke-Tengir
With his tears irrigated land.
The Earth itself grew tender bristles,
Green sprouts arose and wind was played
By swaying spikelets glumes in air.

"Manas, you've proved with your own labor,
That you can live without wars.
Enjoy your harvest, and don't forget,"
Reminded him, Bobo-dyikan,
Of wisdom gleaned from all the strife.

In river valleys, on mountains slopes,
Among Kalmaks and Mongols too
Lived Khan of the Onguts, Kabacha.
Immense were pastures in his view
His countless herds grazed highland grass.
Kabacha offered Khan Manas
To trade his grain for white-winged horse-
Manas named it Akkula; in every battle
From now on, this stallion matched his master.

Chubak's stallion Kok-Ala
Does not let anyone catch up,
If he's the one with whom you race
It's useless to engage in chase.
And if Chubak is ahead of all,
Know that the enemy will fall.
And if behind, Chubak is now,
you'll have a strong defensive rear.
From early age, Chubak was friend
To Er-Manas in battlefield.

Right next to him, dashing Syrgak,
The youngest in the famous squad.
He knows no sleep, no rest in battle
Strong-willed Syrgak's reputation–
Brave and quick to move in fight,
and if he took the spear to hand
No foe can run from mortal fate.

Broad in the shoulders, stocky frame,
He fights, without a fear of death.
With friendly smile, an open face
Syrgak approached his Er-Manas.
And next to him batyr Bakai,
With savvy and a quite clear mind,
The sharpest tongue, he's known to find
A way to convince anyone
And pacify the biggest crowds,
Predict the next day for a friend.
In darkness, with a nighthawk's eye,
The squad he'll lead on rightful paths.
When he's ahead, leading the way,
Success and victory awaits.
And if Bakai runs in the back,
You know you'll have the strongest hand!

In peaceful life and in a battle,
His counsel wise, right on the spot;
He is Manas' firmest shield.
And when he scolds his younger brother,
Be sure he has the grounds for it,
None from the squad objects his word.

When that squad approached Manas,
Along with the old man Kyrgyl,
In anger, Er-Bakai asked him:
"Explain to us, my nephew,
How should we judge your actions now?
You left your state, your throne just like
A woman leaves home in a lurch.
Talas you left behind your back!
Big glory, praise to you, my brother,
With labor you have earned your horse.
But you're not a farmer, you're a fighter!
Protector of the Fatherland!
This sacred duty, my Er-Manas,
Our God has given you Himself!

You swore an oath to the sacred earth-
You'll be the one to defend your race.
From folded steel your sword was made,
Leave this farm life, your steps retrace!
You did resent your father's words,
Decided next to change your oath–
It does not suit you all, Manas!
The goods will come, away they'll go,
Only replaced with newer ones!

But if the land where those goods came
Will change hands again, again
Invaders will not bring to us
These goods, the cattle from the lands!

Once taken, no one will return:
Remember this, brother Manas!”
And forty warriors-choro[62]
All looked at him in aching silence.
Manas, with guilty, heavy head,
said not a word for his response.
And then, he threw his hands in the air,
Displayed his teeth in humble smile–
The kindled face showed his remorse.
Robust and wieldy hurricane,
The sound of this Khan's laughter was.
The laughter spread among his choro,
It deafened spans of herds all near.
Old man Kyrgyl, laughing to tears,
Nearly busted his stomach then,
He took chanach and poured kymyz.
And everyone approached their leader,
Hugged by the shoulders to show support.
He was so touched by loyal friends,
Gave them hugs and hearty kisses,
Wiping his tears with a bear’s grace.

[62] Choro- Manas’ squad of closest friends-warriors

Chubak

THE TALE OF ALMANBET

The Chinese were ruled by sons of khan
By the name of Kakachyn:
Esen, Kary, and Alooke,
And youngest brother was Aziz.
One day the brothers got together
In the palace of Khan Esen:
They all decided it was time
For marriage– Aziz soon would wed.

He was the age of twenty-five,
Yet could not pick himself a bride.
Esen-Khan gave his swift command
To gather all the pretty maidens
From age fifteen until twenty–
All rare beauties on the land.

From Yellow River to the Irtysh,
The stretch of rivers Amur to Dnieper,
Khan summoned beauties all to China.
The show went on in palace square,
The girls, narcissistic with looks,
Each more charming than the last.

Too picky was the Khan Aziz,
With gloom he looked at lovely girls
Until his sight caught graceful eyes–
Her name was maiden Altynai.
"I've made my choice!
She'll be my wife!"
Exclaimed joyfully Khan Aziz.
That moment, maiden Altynai
was ushered into khan-sarai[63] .

[63] Khan's palace

She wore a royal coronet,
and Khan, holding both her hands,
declared her there his lawful bride.
Later everybody learned
Of Altynai coming as a serf.
Her father is Kyrgyz-Burut,
And brothers watched over the herds
Out in the mountain highlands near.

But everything is predetermined:
Aziz chose this for himself,
The word of Khan is not to change!
That’s how Kyrgyz girl Altynai
Became the wife of Chinese Khan.
The roll of dice no one controls,
It's all decided by one’s fate.
So this Kyrgyz girl Altynai
Gave birth, a son to the Chinese Khan.

Old Esen Khan himself gave name
To newborn son of Khan Aziz–
The name he gave was Almanbet,
Who at six years they sent to school
To study with teacher, Ajar.
Teaching children, he had a gift:
How to predict the snow and rain,
And in the heat of summertime
Foresee the wind and cold of winter.

Yet the focus of education
Was the art of war, Ajar
Taught students how to build an army,
How to win in every battle,
Master axes, folded swords,
How fight while riding horseback,
How to wield a spear in war,

Pass safely roaring mountain rivers,
And how to scout in dark of night.

Almanbet

Having studied for ten years,

Alma returned to his parent's home.
In his belt, a sword of folded steel–
Shining just as his axe– aibalta,
Athletic, studious, handsome man,
Accomplished all at age sixteen.
His father was so proud and pleased–
His son matured and gained such strength.

It was decided to hand him over
To the execution of legal cases.

Young Almanbet began with zeal
To bring to justice all the guilty,
And those who no crimes were committed,
He'd let them go without a charge.

He did not take a bribe at all,
True justice was his strongest call.
Content both as plaintiff and defendant,
It looks like people finally found
A righteous judge, welcomed amendments.
One time he came to the zindan[64]
And saw the Turkic-speaking Muslims.
This family owned the fields
Where they harvested the tea.
That year's crop yields were minimal
The family just could not come up
With taxes – high zeket – on time.

Alooke's son– Khan Konurbai
He took whole crop from those men,
And ordered to arrest them all,
Without a trial, to zindan.
The new judge announced his decision:
To free the family at once!
The crops were to be returned, he ordered,
And taxes must be paid to them!

Konur– the son of Khan Alooke,
And the rest of them needed be warned:
The tyranny was at its end!
Learning of this, Konurbai-Khan
came rushing into khan-sarai
and he began to shout at him:
"You, premature dunce Burut,

[64] Prison

How dare you to teach this to Khan's sons
When everyone will gather here?
Your stupid head will part your body!
Give back the crops from the plantation!
Send them back to zindan at once
For your infidel Muslim bonds!"
In anger screamed Khan Konurbai.

"By father's blood you are my brother!
How dare you to yell at me?!
You loot your people like a thief!
Such actions bring disgrace to elders!
I won't allow you to shame our clan!
This greed of yours you need to curb!
Or else, I'll end your life in er-sayish[65]!
I'll knock the arrogance from you!
Remember this, Khan Konurbai!
Yourself you've pictured as a judge!
Your Muslim god will not save you
from death I'll cause you by my sword!

The head of yours I will cut off
And in the dirty, fetid bin
I will deliver to Khan Esen!"
Konur drew his shiny sword,
But Almanbet was quick in action:
He struck with the axe he held in hand,
Konur managed to raise his shield,
otherwise, he would have been killed.
He rushed to run for his dear life,
Alma wanted to catch up with him
and there on the spot end it all.

[65] Jousting match

Konur had the fastest horse– Algar,
As if it had a set of wings,
He saved his owner from his death.
Konur rushed to the palace then,
To Esen-Khan he gave report that
His Muslim nephew Almanbet,
Was a traitor and a scoundrel.

“In front of people for no reason
He tames the name of Kakachin.
It’s all because Alma was born
By that she-wolf he calls a mother,
Born Muslim from his day of birth.
You cannot teach a wolf our ways,
He always longs for scopes of steppes,
Before too late, you have to end
the arrogance of that Burut!”
Or else, believe me, Khan Esen,
He’ll cause much mischief in the kingdom!”
Right at this moment Almanbet
Came to Esen, in strongest rage.

“My khan, how long will you allow
Konurbai mock me? Tell me why
I was appointed as a judge?”
But Esen-Khan was a silent king.
Slurred indistinctly, like an ox,
He rose from throne and left them be.
Insulted was young Almanbet!

He used to think that Khan Esen
Was shrewd, real honest, and sincere.
But now, no doubt, he was convinced
No difference in Konur or him
Mischievous, greedy blabbermouth!
He decided to kill him then,

Seize all the power in Chinese land,
Take sweet revenge on Konurbai.

His whole plan thought out, Almanbet:
Who he would bribe, which one to kill
how he would take the Khan's throne,
His daydream broken by Burulcha–
Daughter of the Khan Esen,
A beautiful and slender girl
As if by accident came out.
Expressed herself in quiet manner:
"I heard of you a while ago,
And I admire all your deeds.

For truth and honor and kindness,
I know you stand bravely as a judge,
I need to warn you who to trust:
Your father, Khan Aziz deceives you!
My dear father Esen-Khan
Gave order to his brother Aziz,
To kill you soon with his own hands
And bury you under the ground.

My father said:
Your son is Muslim
And was this way from his birth,
He won't let us live peacefully!'"
Bewildered was young Almanbet:
He never thought of such events.
He had a crush on Burulcha
From youngest years he'd seen her first.

"Oh, Burulcha, forgive me please!
I've seen you here more than the once,
I dreamt of sending father to you–
Too afraid of a refusal.

Oh, Burulcha, my tender love!
I am so happy to see you now!
Regardless of threats of death you are here
Without you I will not hope to live!”

“Oh no, my dear, you need to flee.
And save your life while you're still free!
My father is old, but not eternal;
when he leaves for another world,
In Beijing there will be a new Khan–
You will go back to native lands.
Take me with you, and only then
Real happiness will come to us.
We will be joyous, raise our children
in your homeland– just you and I.

Please be content and sure of me,
I'll wait for you until my death!
Farewell, Alma, my sweet beloved!
Let the Creator keep you safe,”
Burulcha gently whispered to him,
And on the neck of her beloved,
Hung Buddhist talisman for luck.

Almanbet was so very happy,
From his meeting with Burulcha,
The only love he’d known so far.
But he did not believe her word
That Aziz Khan, his own father,
Could wish the death of only son.

Alma came rushing to his father:
“I learned that cruel Esenkhan
Has ordered you to kill me swift.
I thought, apparently, an old man,
Had plans of ruining us both.

It's all because old khan cannot
Share the power in their hands.
To save ourselves we need to act
Quite quickly to stay ahead!
I had prepared everything
to capture Esen Khan's throne!”
In all his rage he told the father.

“I know, Konur is a brazen fellow,
But he’s your brother by my blood.
And if you thought to capture the throne,
Then you’re the traitor and a scoundrel!
Calling for such revolution-
Your mother’s blood is a wicked root!”
Was the answer of Aziz Khan then.

To hear such words from his own father,
Alma did not expect at all,
He almost killed him at that moment,
Hardly able to cork up emotions,
Hid his dagger in its sheath.
He came to mother– told her all.

“Aziz, your father's a jealous man,
From time of birth until these days
He still suspects you’re not his son.
Or maybe you, just as Jesus,
Were conceived by Holy Spirit,
in my own womb I had experienced
The Muslims holy rite– sunnit.
And here, in your own homeland,
You, my dear son, are doomed,
You’ll never be a Khan in here.

To the Chinese you’ll always be
Burut from steppes, infidel Muslim,

To save your life we must escape
Into my native, promised land,”
Said Altynai to her grown child.
And late at night, mother with son
Together left the Chinese grounds.

The Great Walls near– at border posts,
Alma eluded all the guards.
Just as China was left behind,
Mother and son reached mountain pass
When archer’s arrow struck her heart–
He lost his mother on that run.
Alma scattered Altynai's ashes
On native soil she longed for so.
Almanbet came to unknown lands,
All by himself, with reeling soul.

Fleeing

THE TALE OF HOW ALMANBET CAME TO KAZAKH KHAN KOKCHO

Running from China, Almanbet
Wandered around the world for days,
He came to the expansive steppes
into the blessed Sary-Arka.
Its ruler was Khan Aidarkan;
He reigned together with his son.

Seeing the traveler from afar,
Young Khan Kokche came out to greet.
“Who are you? Where do you seek?
What fate has brought you to our lands?
By tradition of the steppes
Come eat with us, and then we’ll talk!”
“My father is Khan Aziz, Chinese
By mother I will be Kyrgyz,”
Said the Kazakh's young Almanbet.

And then he told of what he frets–
Of how his own father made threats,
Of how that sneaky Konurbai
had slandered him to everyone,
of how, to save their very lives,
with mother, from the land he fled.
Quite picturesque, Kokcho chose camp
To place the yurt for Almanbet
Like brother treated him Kokche.

Alma the outcast, wanderer,
Was pleased with this new turn of fate:
In these Kazakh steppes he acquired
Good brothers and the best of friends.
Six months in camp with Almanbet
He taught jigits the skills of the brave:

To shoot a bow, to wield a spear,
Master a sword in combats well,
Slay enemies, or capture them–
While catching enemies in battle,
Keep your head safe from aibalta.
And so, when spring came to the land,
Alma took jigits for a jaunt
to upper reaches of Amu Darya.

From those places Almanbet
Fetched a herd of stallions quick
Kalmak Khan Joloy took them
To the last spring from Kazakh steppes.

Khan Kokcho was very pleased:
Alma returned them, resolved khan's grudge.
The natural flow of events
Lead Almanbet to be their judge.
The young Kokcho Khan indeed
Was honest, true, in counsel wise,
Judged everyone with a fair mind,
Condemned and punished those with fault.

He had a knack to quickly know
who was right and who held guilt.
Khan and his family embraced
Alma as their real blooded brother.
"A loyal friend to you Alma,
Friendship like this needs cherishing,"
Said Akerkech– Khan's elder wife.

"You cannot please the relatives:
Who won the case, they will be happy,
but bitter losers always rail,
create all sorts of tittle -tattle."

The jaundiced-eye by name of envy
Played a role in here as well:
A secret murmur began to spread:
“This one Kalmak, escaped his homeland,
Trampled us like we're manure.
Our Khan Kokcho’s completely clueless–
His own people he disregards!”
They decided between themselves
to banish Alma at any cost.

Everyone knew that Kokche-khan
was a generous, valorous man,
but when it came to his own wife,
He was most jealous man alive.
Servants were bribed by secret pact,
They spread a dirty rumor around
That Almanbet and Akerkech
Met up in secret and were found.
The rumors reached Kokcho himself,
His baibiche was a faithless wife
At times of hunting trips, he had.
When he spent nights with his tokol,
His elder wife, the baibiche,
Entertained the Chinese man.
Batyr Kokcho was overwhelmed,
With jealous rage he clenched his fist.
He decided, finally,
Assemble relatives and friends
and if their counsel would confirm,
He’d banish that Chinese scoundrel.
Khan’s yurt gathered a counsel then;
He drank arak[66] mixed with kymyz.
Khan started: “Here, the rumors spread
That Akerkech and Almanbet

[66] Vodka

Nefarious ties have shared, I dread!
And if the rumors have real base,
This Chinese I'll kill and detest.

Unfaithful wife, backwards on saddle
She'll sit, for all villages to see
Adulterine, before her end by my hands.
If all of this will turn a lie–
The gossipers go under the knife"
The boozed khan told his counsel gathered.

Khan Aidarhan arose from seat:
"You know, my son's a jealous man.
Your fear has been perpetual–
Even if one would glance at her.
So tell me, why you chose as wife
The beauty, which attracts the eye?
God endowed some with beauty,
so others could worship with their gaze!

Proud should be this lucky jigit
To whom that beauty is the wife!
You'll never be in full control
If a woman sets her mind to strife!
And my advice to one who's jealous:
To live in harmony, you should
Enchant your pretty wife yourself!"
His son was drunk and quite relentless,
It was in vain to sense with him.

"We gathered here for one good reason:
Khan's honor is sacred to all–
Such actions shouldn't be allowed!"
Exclaimed his sketchy friends aloud.
"We all have our own households,
And don't have the time to watch your wife.

You need to ask, our dear Kokcho,
Your younger wife, your own tokol!
What do you know, Beidaigul, tell me,
Has baibiche been faithful to her Khan?"
Kokche Khan asked his young tokol.
The young and beautiful Beiday
Was carefree and very stupid,
Plus, on that day she was quite drunk.
"I love my sister Akerkech,
And if she has committed sin,
I cannot judge by any stretch!

What she's busy with when you're gone,
In her own house, I can't keep track!
If baibiche sinned and did you wrong,
She needs to make her own confession!"
Insinuated the young tokol.
Khan's fury grew by big proportions;
He ordered, bring Alma to him.
"When the Kalmak[67] enters the room,
Kill him right there without a trial!"
In anger ordered the jealous batyr.

When Almanbet arrived at last,
With friendly greeting of "Salam";
All those who were in the yurt of Khan
Replied to greeting with "Alik".
Khan's voice was angry with a shout:
"And who just told me in this room
To kill this scoundrel? Do all back out?
Are you all so scared by the sight?
As if here comes a mighty lion?
The fear is oozing from your faces,
And where is your pride, Kazakh, I ask?!"

[67] Referring to Almanbet

“I do not understand, my brother.
What am I blamed for– what’s my fault?”
Asked Khan, the hero Almanbet.
“Did you hear his answer?
The place where the orchards bloom,
Rosehips will grow, the people say.
And where the lion dwells as well,
the bear hides in the backside den!
You know of this, dear Almanbet!”

“Does all this mean you are the orchard,
And I the rosehip– a prickly bastard.
You are the formidable, mighty lion,
and I am the coward-bear here?
Or maybe everything’s reversed?
A truth like this so very painful
To drunk Kokcho and jealous friends?”
Sarcastic was then Almanbet.

“You are a hypocrite! A lecher! Liar!
A traitor to your homeland! Scoundrel!
Seize him!” ordered drunk Kokche.
His men rushed to seize with force.
“Back off! I'll kill you!” said Alma,
And drew his sharp and shiny sword,
Ready for everyone who was there,
He'd cut off the head of who came forward.
All knew this: Alma in battle
would not give mercy to anyone,
against one hundred able men
all by himself he could resist.
But Almanbet came to his senses:
“I see our venerable khan
is drunk, and no less drunk in public,
And I forgot he is the ruler.

My one advice to you: don’t lose
your own dignity and honor!
You’re treating me as enemy,
I never thought it'd come to this!
Farewell, my friend!” said Almanbet.

When he was leaving on horseback
the yurt of khan young Almanbet,
Akerkech caught up with him:
” Forgive him, dear Almanbet!
Kokche-khan chose to trust the rumors.
You see, tonight he’s really drunk.
Soon as he sobers up, I know,
Forgiveness, he himself will ask.”

“Oh, no, jene! I understood
I won’t be left alone in here!
With envy, cowardice, flattery,
There always is deception, malice!
This picture is all too well- known,
That was the reason I came here,
Leaving my homeland and my friends,
The only love, who waits for me.
Farewell, jene! Forget it all!”
Almanbet said and took his leave.

Kokcho khan

TALE OF HOW ALMANBET CAME TO MANAS

Assembling his batyrs, Manas
said to them: “I look at you
and only boredom you express,
A longing for your glory days,
Intrigues, the gossips, much ado–
You can’t escape that anywhere.
The native land under our feet,
No reason to go into war.

Once stately steeds get fat and fed,
We’re doomed for humdrum life ahead.
Maybe, a hunt we should arrange
And train our hand in shooting game,
Scout out the wolves with taigans[68]?”
Together with his friends– choro[69],
Once dashing warriors they were,
Unmarried, lively, quick to move,
Now all turned into paunchy klutzes,
With families, domestic junk,
And some already grew too old.

With ardor watchword was announced,
As if to war, he led to game.
Manas’ taigan Kumayik
The pack of dogs chased after wolves,
His loyal falcon Ak-Shumkar,
Regardless his respectful age,
Wild game it caught in those clear skies.

After they shot two dozen beasts,
Argalis, deer, and wild goats,
On the strands of Talas River

[68] Breed of hunting dogs in Kyrgyzstan
[69] Forty closest warrior-friends of Khan Manas

Forty choro all stood froze:
They caught a glimpse of a runagate
A traveler in Chinese clothes.
The sight of the galloping choro
Made the runagate turn to the river.
“I am searching for Manas,”
In Kazakh dialect he spoke.
“I bear the name of Almanbet,
Of twenty-eight years of age.
My father– Chinese Khan Aziz,
By mother’s ties, I’m yours, Kyrgyz.
My uncle cruel Alooke you know
Too well as your sworn enemy.
His son– Khan Konurbai would be
My cousin by the ties of blood.
Insidious slanderer, a villain,
He disregards you as free people.
A scolding he gave to his father,
Because he ceded without a fight
His throne and usurped Fergana.
He caused misfortunes in my fate:
Cast me out from my own land!
I came here to the land Talas,
Looking for luck and fate's new plans.
The scoundrel Konurbai will see,
When time is right, he’ll die from me!
You are the brothers of my mother,
I want to stay in here, with you.

Have faith in me, I am your friend,
Ready to serve you, Er-Manas!”
Astonished was Manas to hear,
He remembered a dream he had:
Forthwith came mighty elephants,
Bowing to him, asking to serve.
Manas asked his choro’s advice:

“What will we do with him, my friends?
I can’t decide his fate alone!
He is by father’s blood, a foe,
By mother’s blood– our brother though!”
An answer came from Bakai himself:
“The essence of a human soul
Is in his actions and his thoughts!
I do believe that Almanbet
Tells us the truth and not a lie.
Sound judgment seems to me his cries:
Let’s start a toi for our new friend!”
Happy was Almanbet to find–
Until his death he was with them!

Umai Ene's Blessing

MARRIAGE OF MANAS TO KANYKEI

Two wives had Er-Manas by now,
He lived on earth for thirty years.
Just like his father, he turned to grief,
On absence of a progeny.
Both Karabork and Akylai
Could get along amongst themselves,
They shared a husband without frays
Yet none gave him a son to raise.

Seeing his friend in desolation,
Alma revealed his thoughts aloud:
“Despite two wives, you are still single;
You did not woo them in any way,
You did not go to them like a bridegroom,
And kalyn[70] you never paid.
Their parents wanted peace, not war
And gave their daughters as a bond.

And maybe our almighty God
Does not give you continuation
for the fact that you, in war,
Did not adhere to marriage laws?”
Alma asked his friend jokingly.

Manas batyr pondered this;
“The truth is told by this gentile!”
He met his father with the thought
And told him how the dues forgot
In failure led to not one son.

[70] Money, property, goods, herds given to bride’s parents as a permission to marry their daughter

“I’ve lived for thirty years by now,
And you, my father, failed your duty.
Your first daughter-in-law, I took
as trophy in the wake of battle.

Kayip gave me without kalyng,
You did not pay that at all!
And when we left the land Alai,
My second wife turned Akylai.
Shoruk Khan gave me his own daughter
As kun he paid for those
whom he had killed in uneven battle.
Do not disgrace yourself, my father:
Am I not worthy of a real wife?
I know you are the biggest miser,
But it is your duty, father!
If for bride her parents ask
the biggest kalyn for us to pay
we will be able to fulfill–
The people will be well supportive.

Choose wisely, father, for yourself,
A daughter-in-law who’s really kind,
Charming, and, the most important,
Righteous in work and daily life,
Who is able to give wise counsel,

Can be a family, a friend,
A faithful wife for the rest of life.
When death arrives knocking for me,
She’ll be the one whom I can entrust
My testament to the descendants,”
Batyr Manas told his old father.

Jakyp bai was in deep dismay–
How could he fail his biggest duty?

So many years he'd been a father,
Yet gave no wedding for his son!
In his stinginess no one
Could reproach him, as before,
Taking his gold and silver coins,
His furs, and other goods along,
He went to search for a worthy bride.

He passed Jizak and Samarkand,
Tashkent, Uzgen, and Fergana,
His final point of destination then
Was the splendid city Bukhara.
The satrap[71] there, by name Alim,
with whom Jakyp shared friendship once,
Learning the goal of his friend's visit
Shared his knowledge on the matter.

"The Bukharian ruler, our emir,
Most rich and glorious Atemir,
Has a daughter ready for marriage.
In our parts everyone knows,
she's beautiful and most sagacious,
to all who come with a proposal,
she refuses, saying that
she is awaiting another groom.

Bukharian emir will be most honored:
He knows, remembers Manas' name.
We all recall how Er-Manas
From our land of Fergana
Chinese oppressors had expelled.
He would be glad to be related!"
Such counsel given to bai Jakyp-
Alim, satrap of Bukhara.

[71] Mayor of the city

Sent his report to Khan Sarai,
Manas' father bai Jakyp
Came with important interest.
Bukharian ruler, Atemir
Invited bai Jakyp forthwith
And treated him with biggest honor.
Once he learned his reason for visit,
He answered that he'd be most happy
If the Kyrgyz became related,
Lasting bonds it would create.
"There is one thing I need to mention:
My eldest daughter, Sanirabiga,
Has character, and her own will:
Once, she swore, if I agree
To give her hand in marriage,
Without showing her the groom,
She'll end her life, and so she will.

So, my advice to you, dear Jakyp,
Ask gallant batyr Er-Manas,
to visit me and Bukhara city.
Here, your son will see my daughter.
Upon the meeting of their eyes
It will be up to them to decide.
Your son is a most worthy suitor!"
Said Atemir to bai Jakyp.
Came to Talas our bai Jakyp,
Shared the details with son, Manas,
About choosing him a bride
And how emir of Bukhara
Gave him the warmest of receptions,
And the news that Sanirabiga
Expressed to see the groom herself.
Upon her liking she will say
"Yes" to wedding-toi ahead.

“Chin up, Manas!” joked closest friends,
“Or else your journey will be in vain!
Spruce up your mustache and your beard,
Put on new clothes and cut your nails
Learn to express a tender smile
On that fierce face to win this bride!”
Manas, quite happy with his looks,
Along with his squad, forty choro,
Prepared to leave as if to battle
Under the southern, desert heat.
When they arrived to Bukhara
Manas was treated as an idol.

Emir himself came out to meet,
The most glorious, Atemir.
The people knew that Kyrgyz Khan
Brought to his land of Turkestan
Freedom, justice, long-awaited peace.
The plentiful feast ended then.
Bright candles lit for entertainment,
The sisters Aruuke, Sani,
Presented dancers to the guests.

Young girls, the dancers were so charming
So light, like air, and full of grace
In clear knickers, as if from glass,
They fluttered lightly, moved apace.

Divine beauties such as these
The highland nomad had never seen.
Tajik girls with their innate grace,
Shrewd warriors they left quite speechless.

Among them was the only one–
A face most beautiful and gentle,
And slightly taller than the others

In golden earrings with matching pendant.
The blackest eyes burned like two stars,
As if from heavens they were put
On the fair face of young Sani.
The girl was slender as a swan.
Jakyp approached his son, Manas
And whispered softly: “That is her.”
Manas felt instant, deep affection,
Wiped a tear from burning eyes.
After he saw Sanirabiga,
Manas was stunned with the delight
He thought: "Will there be a limit
to the celestial beauty of this girl?"
And next to her was Aruuke–
The only sister of Sani;
She was not tall as her older sister,
But still so beautiful as well.
“What is the age of the younger sister?”
Asked Almanbet subtly his friend.
Any could see from sparkly eyes
He was in love with Aruuke,
Ready for wedding-toi nike.

The feast and entertainments ended,
Emir allowed Er-Manas
To meet his daughters’ eye to eye.
So Er-Manas and Almanbet
Went to the chambers after the feast.

In the tradition of the steppes,
Manas wanted to kiss her hand
With golden bracelet to embellish.
He approached the proud bride,
Touched her gently by the elbow,
She grabbed a dagger in a trice,
Pierced the hand that touched her elbow.

Manas grumbled in pain–
Such hasty moves were not foreseen.
“How dare you, Khan of Kyrgyz,
The savage, nomad and just brute,
To touch my hand without nike!
My maiden honor is at stake!”
Shouted at him Sanirabiga.

Manas drew his folded sword,
Ready to behead, so fierce and bold,
But Almanbet came in to halt
And sway his friend from fatal fault.
Manas, so cross, humiliated,
In blood, with a hand just cut
Left the palace ireful and swift,
Gave orders to the squad awaiting,
To take revenge for such insult.
Destroy the city of Bukhara,
Shatter the palace of emir,
The dancers, Rabiga with sister,
Capture and take both into the steppes.

The city was captured from every side
by troops Manas had sent that night,
and there, behind the fortress wall,
the bloody battle had begun,
Causing destruction to Bukhara.

Sani came running to her father:
“To save our city from demise
I’ll sacrifice my own life!
To the Kyrgyz I’ll go myself,
And face my own fate in there!
In case he’ll be abrupt with me,
I’ll end my life, will not flee.”

“In anger is eerie Khan Manas,
I am afraid he’ll show no mercy.
Insulted nomad, withal Khan
Is so relentless, so very surly!”
Said the father to his daughter,
Deciding to keep her within his reach.
“Oh, father, no! Just let me go!
To Khan Manas I’ll go myself,”
Said with regret, Sanirabiga.
Holding a white headscarf in hand,
Raising it high above her head
Went to her fate, a heroic act.

The Kyrgyz watchmen were too stumped,
What is the order: to shoot, or wait?
The sharpest eye had Almanbet:
“This girl is Sanirabiga!
Look Er-Manas, all by herself
The proud bride came by her own will!”
As wind flew off his horse, Manas,
Ran to her so overwhelmed
He kissed the hand she cut so deep.
The Tajik girl stood with opened arms,
Embraced his neck so tenderly,
Manas held her close to his heart,
He sobbed so tense, like a little child.

The moment it appeared to her
That Er-Manas is made
From the heights of heaven above,
From golden, silver, shining within,
From earthly kindness, tender love,
From rising sun of every morning,
In darkest night the brightest moon.

If goals he sets– he's an ocean wave,
Born by the clouds of the sky.
He is a miracle on Earth.
Explain– you can't, not enough words,
For love she felt, burning as fire,
In maiden's heart for Er-Manas!

The mighty, brave Khan Er-Manas,
Won enemies both cruel and big,
Yet victories over the battles,
Gave him no happiness like this.
"Get up, my Khan! Forgive me, please!
Henceforth, such insolence from me
You will not see!" said Sanirabiga.

The camps of both sides of battle,
Were noisy, cheering up their Khan.
The skies had cleared, the mountains sang,
The gates of Bukhara opened,
With loud music they met again.
Then wedding followed soon after!

Kanykei meets Manas

That's how got married Er-Manas,
Along with bosom friend Alma:
Manas had married Sanirabiga,
Alma to younger wife Aruuke.
The years have passed, centuries gone.

The name Sanirabiga is forgotten.
What's left– the name of Kanykei,
Which means a regal Khan's nike.
Since then unto our present day,
Among our people lives Kanykei.

The ancient Tajik girl is considered
The real mother of every Kyrgyz.
The symbol of love and family,
Of friendship, a mother, and a wife–
We bow to her with gratitude!

Kyrgyz people met the young wife of Manas with admiration and love. The first two wives Karabork and Akylai were friendly and tactful. Sanirabiga (now Kanykei) learned the language and the way of life of Kyrgyz people very quickly and soon became a true friend and advisor to Khan Manas who was acknowledged as a head of the family and earned the respect and honor of whole Kyrgyz khaganate.

Aruuke

THE TALE OF HOW A RELATIVE OF MANAS KOZKAMAN WANTED TO POISON HIM

The head of all Khans, Esenhan,
Assigned his satraps with the order:
“Go kill Manas, by any means!
He who fulfills this goal will receive
His own Khanate to rule over.”

When the besieger Alooke
Exiled Kyrgyz from their own lands,
The descendant of Orozdu– Usen,
Changed his name to Kozkaman,
And settled there in his disguise.
The fact that he’s of Kyrgyz blood
Was hidden from the Chinese well.

So Kozkaman and his eldest son
Decided to visit Khan-sarai:
To Er-Manas they planned to go,
And gain his trust during their stay.
Kill him with poison and deceit,
And get rewards for that ill deed.

This vile, sordid Kozkaman
Sent his letter to Talas,
In which he shed so many tears,
Describing sufferings he faced,
Humiliation of serving the invaders,
The hunger, dangers, the disguise,
His happiness, that, above all
Er-Manas united people,
He formed a strong Khaganate at last.

Manas was touched by the mendacious letter,
Sent out an invite to them all,

And placed them close to Khan-sarai,
By generous kindness of his heart
He gave them cattle, pastures, and horses.

Deceptive, foxy Kozkaman,
In front of people, for all to see,
Asked the Almighty to bless Manas,
But for some reason Kanykei
Did not believe a word he said.
One day Kozkaman invited
Manas to have tea with him,
Seeing his warriors-choro
Were on leave to borderlands.

Kozkaman's son Kokchekoz
Poured arak into the goblet
And a speech he gave in front of all:
"We're all brothers who came here,
But fate commanded not long ago
For us to part all over earth.
You are our brother, Er-Manas,
You have assembled all of us
And saved us all from bitter death.
This arak I brought to you
From distant China all the way,"
A bowl of poison, Kokchekoz,
With smile presented to Khan Manas.

The bowl was emptied by Manas,
In breathing space, he lost his strength.
The traitor, miser Kozkaman,
With the greedy nine sons he brought
Decided to seize the moment,
Behead Manas while he was poisoned,
Take it to Khan Esenkhan,
And gain a khanate to rule in return.

Fool Kozkaman, taking the dagger
Waited cowardly for the Khan to die.
Manas felt the breath of death.
He thought: “Where is my brother, Er-Bakai?
Where’s Kanykei, where’s Ajibai?
Where are my twin brothers and best of friends–
My Almanbet, and my Chubak?
Where’s Serek, and my true Syrgak?
Where are the falcons on the fly–
My Yrchy– Uul and Shuutu?
Where is my uncle– Khan Koshoy?
Indeed, without seeing them all,
Will I leave to another world?”
Groaned the betrayed, and poisoned Manas
Without opening his eyes.
Akayar– the steward of Khan Manas,
Was tending the Khan’s horse and waiting
When he noticed that Ak-Kula,
Snorted, beat the ground with hooves,
Tore right up his snaffle bit.

So sensed the steward Akayar
In trouble is Ak-Kula’s rider.
He rushed to Khan-sarai at once,
Where Kanykei waited for Manas.
“Jene! The sun is gone! Our Khan is killed!”
The jigit yelled behind the door.

At the same instant, calling the guards,
Kanykei rushed to her husband.
Kozkaman’s son Kokchekoz
Was pressing the dagger to Manas' head,
So Kanykei took out her sword,
The villain’s arm she cut off clean.
The jigits she brought to the scene

Quickly killed off the traitor's sons
And burnt their yurts down to the ground.
For lengthy nights, without sleep,
Looked after her husband, Kanykei.
And only after ten whole days,
Manas revived to light again,
The traitor– scoundrel Kozkaman,
Almost succeeded in his slaying!

Kanykei

KHAN KOKETEY'S FUNERAL IN THE VALLEY OF KARKYRA

The rich and glorious Koketey
By will of God and destiny
Had reached the end of days he had.
He coughed and moaned,
and sensed himself:
"Within a day, or maybe two
For good I'll leave the earth itself."

His final wills he had to say,
To his own brother, Baimurza.
"I feel that death came to collect,
I've only one son as my heir–
The young and careless Bokmurun.
The people gave him such a nickname
For never wiping his nose like a child.

He's only fifteen years of age,
My end has come, yet he's not here
And all around my deathbed– bare.
He found love with a girl– Kanyshai
As suitor gone to the next ail.

When he gets home from his young quest
Tell him my wish as a behest:
Upon my leave to another world
For my mortal parting– no need for tears.

No need for noise, just silence please,
As a man who's reached exhaustive years.
Old woman, who's lived a century,
Give my remains to native land.
Advise my son against the show,
Don't let funeral turn to feast.

At the beginning of the day,
And with the sunset by the fire,
Don't let the women sing koshok[72]
Announcing all about my death.
Tell Bormurun my honest wish:
Do not invite too many guests,
And skip the races and baige –
A modest wake when I have left.

The people know that I am rich,
My meadows grazed by countless herds:
The sheep and camels, yaks and cows.
My daughters wed to the richest suitors,
My gold and silver made them bow.

My only son, young Bokmurun,
You see, was not born for hard work;
I sense he'll squander all the wealth.
My fear that after I will die,
Foes of Kyrgyz– Khan Neskara,
Khan Sooronduk and Konurbai,
And mighty, greedy Khan Joloy,
Under the veil of wishing well,
As if to honor my death will
With haste have thoughts of robbing our wealth,
My endless herds to take away.
Don't send the word to Khan Manas,
He is the Khan of all Talas;
All Kyrgyz clans are now as one,
He's built the mighty, strongest nation.
The fire will have no place to go,
The quick choro will call for trouble.
If all of them come to my ash[73]–
Khans Neskara, Konur, Manas,

[72] Wailing farewell song after the departed
[73] Ceremonial funeral, wake

I am afraid that my own death
Will end with the bloodiest of wars.

The Kypchak batyr– Khan Urbu,
And Chatkal's Khan– Muzburchak,
The valorous Kokcho-Kazakh,
Batyr Toshtuk, whose deeds are legends,
From Andijan– Khan Sanchybek,
Eshtek's son– Khan Jamgyrchy,
They are against the union,
Amongst themselves they now say:
Batyr Manas became conceited,
Seized all the power to himself.
No need to send them any word,
About the fact that I am dying.

My fear is that, gathered here,
These friends so skilled at softest war
Will fight till death– I am the seer."
Finished his words wise Koketey,
And having made the final sigh,
Left the world of living people.
Before the relatives and friends
Had time to cry for their departed,
An only son appeared from afar.
Bitter tears shed Bokmurun
Over missing his father's will.

When mountains felt the nights embrace,
He washed the face from bitter tears,
All of the people were in the yurts,
Black-bearded uncle Baimurza
Called his nephew for a word,
Told son his father's final wishes.

“Your father gave such covenant:
To native land give his remains,
His wake should not resemble a khan’s
But only a humble, simple man’s,
Or baibiche who lived a long life.
Without noise, in humble silence
A simple burial he asked.
Requested that we keep it quiet,
Do not send word about his death.
None of the Khans need to be present
At a funeral that’s held for him.
For his closest friend Manas
He asked withhold the invitation.

He said to arrange his wake
Without the games and the baige,
Without kurosh, sayish, jamby.
And with the morning light, at dawn
No woman cries for him koshok.
He wanted all men to forget
That lived on earth once Koketey.

Your father was so rich and famous,
Why would he ask this, I don’t get.
But maybe, our wise Aksakal
Decided to give you a final test–
If you are greedy, unlike him?”
Ended his speech, sly Baimurza.

(The way he spoke of the father’s wishes
He had some motives of his own–
Get drunk, get fed and entertained
At the wake of the brother he once had)
Interpreted young Bokmurun
His father’s will all contrary.
As sign of grief for losing father,

Decided he to call all Khans,
And to arrange his ash so grand
That the centuries ahead
All would remember Koketey!
At the same moment he ordered to saddle
His horse, whose name was Maaniker.
Rushed out as light began to dawn,
To father's faithful friend he headed,
Get his advice from Er-Manas.

And by the evening his swift tulpar[74]
Took him to the bank of Talas River.
Learning that Koketey had passed,
A true friend in life, faithful in battles,
Embraced Manas the grieving heir.
With weariness he told his heart,
He was away from home that day.
The fact that death was near for father,
No one had warned him before the trip.
His father's final wishes, wills,
He did not hear them for himself.

His uncle Baimurza delivered
The covenant all in detail,
So Bokmurun asked Er-Manas
To manage ash for Koketey.
Quite smug our hero Er-Manas
(We've seen that feature more than once),
Was flattered with such big request,
And promised young heir Bokmurun
To arrange a wake for his faithful friend,
The whole world would learn about his name.
His ash would be arranged and managed
By not someone, but him– Manas!

[74] Fastest horse (Kyrgyz)

To Bokmurun he gave the order:
“Call to memorial ash ahead:
All friends and enemies around
And those who decide not to show
Will get punishment from their Khan!”
Did not perceive young Bokmurun
The hidden thought behind that order,
The fact that Khan Manas decided
Under the ash for Koketey
Gather all enemies and foes
Along with relatives and friends,
To show his army’s readiness,
In games of shooting gold jamby,
In er-sayish and the art of wrestling,
In races alaman– baige.
He wanted to parade his troops
So everyone would be convinced
The boundless power of Er-Manas.

Receiving council of his Khan
Appeased and solaced Bokmurun
With lights of dawn left to Tashkent.
Fleet-footed horse, his Maaniker
Moved as if he was a winged beast.

The fact that he went to Talas,
None of the relatives found out.
The old man was given to the earth,
The relatives fell on their knees.
Rite farewell they had arranged,
A dozen mares, hundreds of cattle and sheep
Were sacrificed to honor the late khan.
Young Bokmurun called out Koshoy:
“Give me your counsel, the wisest man–
My dear old uncle Koshoy.

The countless goods, more of the cattle
I have received as father's heir,
In year of time I plan to have
A wake to honor my late father,
From every corner of the earth
The guests will come for the remembrance–
My father's name I want to etch
For the longest time in people's minds.
To honor the memory of father,
I won't hold back my gold and wealth,
Let everyone both close and far
Learn of my father's glorious life!
Uncle Koshoy, please tell me now
The right place with the widest of jailoo
So, yurts can hold thousands of people
With boundless space to put that all.

The river needs to flow close by
To watch from afar over the races,
Which will include hundreds of horses.
In case the sun will get too hot,
The guests will have the river breeze."
The wisest man, uncle Koshoy,
A great savant of native land
(His counsel was not in vain at all),
Said: "No place in the world will fit as right
As the blessed valley Karkyra.

The place is hugged by snowy peaks,
The ceaseless mountains reach the skies,
Its grass is just like velvet carpet,
Kegen's raucous river flows below–
No place on earth is just like this!
Its water is pure as a tear,
So sweet and tasty– a drink of the Gods!

The yurts for thousands of our guests
Will fit with ease in Karkyra.
Along the banks of Kegen river
We'll dig the hearths to put the fires,
The place for boilers, samooors[75],
To graze the horses, plenty space.

Koketey's spirit will be content
For having wake at sacred lands!"
Prodigal son Bokmurun
Rose to his moment in a year,
And in that time, he took all power
In the khanate he got from father.

He ordered on the eve of spring
Saddle the horses for lengthy journey,
And load on camels and the oxen,
Boilers and yurts for all the guests.
To native Yssyk-Kul he headed,
To form an ail of nomadic tribes.

Thousands of cattle took direction
Into the valley Karkyra
And to the bank's river Kegen,
A chosen place to honor father
Memorial ash that place will hold.

The one who bends the word of khan
Will receive punishment and scolding:
Their fire in the hearth he'll cease,
And let the ashes fly in wind,
Take all their cattle, burn their yurt,
Will banish from the khaganate.
All feared the young and cruel khan,

[75] A kettle to boil water for tea

So none could disobey his word.
The simple folk learned in a year
How ruthless turns this youngster khan.
He folded the yurts into parts,
Loaded on oxen and on camels
Their tableware and other goods,
Nomadic outfits they put.

Khan's horse by the name of Maaniker
Was adorned with silver harness,
Raising their green ancestral banner,
The widow with a retinue of women,
In bracelets, rings and all their jewelry,
In fur, and in mourning scarves
Started the long journey ahead.

The koshokchu[76] vied with each other,
Made an agreement amongst themselves
Praised with the tearful songs aloud
The unheard glory of the late Khan–
How he was brave in all the wars,
In peaceful time with friends and all,
How he defended all the people,
How he arranged his daughters' weddings.

They praised his generosity,
His marches with batyr Manas,
How wealth and fame he gained as Khan.
They rode regardless of sweat and pain,
The people, horses, all the cattle,
By morning of day forty-fifth
Reached the banks of the wide Kegen.
The tired, worn out caravan
Having made a long, exhausting trip

[76]Singers (usually old women) who sing a wailing song, praising the departed relative

In Karkyra, ancestor’s valley
Were greeted by fresh mountain dawn.

Sunset in Ala-Too

INVITATION TO THE WAKE FUNERAL OF KOKETEY

In the open space of Karkyra,
Having set up their yurts and fire,
On slopes of highlands cattle grazed,
In boilers, wineskins, chanaches[77]
A portion of kymyz was poured.

Bokmurun, son of Koketey
Called in his messenger Aidar,
Ordered to saddle Maaniker
And to prepare him for the trip.
“Spread word to every corner of Earth,
Late autumn, when cattle are fat,
When highland grass in our jailoo
Fills the bellies of camels–
Autumn will come to Karkyra
Memorial ash we will arrange
To my late father Koketey.

Those who refuse to come to ash
Harsh punishment will need to face.
I was instructed to do this
Not by just anyone, but Manas!
From Margelan call Malabek,
From Andijan– Khan Sanjybek,
From Samarkand call Alybek;
Call all of them and let them come
To our grand wake in Karkyra.
Go further, to Bukhara city,
Ruled by most glorious Atemir–
Pass him my greetings when you meet!
When you reach the mouth of seven rivers
You’ll meet the people of Jediger–

[77] Wineskin, leather vessel to hold kymyz, or grain

Call Khan Bagysh to our wake!
The master of the mountains, valleys,
Son of Budayik– Muzburchak–
Call him as well to join our ash!
On banks of rivers Chon Kemin,
Back in the day a poor peasant
But nowadays immensely rich–
To Urbu bai send my invite!
There is Eshtek's son Jamgyrchy
From the Kyrgyz they have stemmed out,
Tell them– Manas himself summons all
To this memorial ash we'll have!
In endless steppes of Sary-Arka,
Lives gallant Kazakh Kokcho Khan–
Call him to join us in Karkyra!
Those lands are settled by Kalmaks,
Their ruler is Khan Orokkyr,
He met my father Koketey–
Call him as well to join the wake.

Go further, to the Greater China,
Whose ruler is Manchu Neskara–
Call him to come to father's ash[78].
And next to him is old Alooke–
Ask him to be our guest in here.

On shores of wide and rare rivers
With water running of yellow hue,
That will be Konurbai's khanate–
Call him along with his retinue
For our big feast of ash!

And if he suddenly refuses,
Cause trouble for respectful gesture,

[78] A ceremonial wake

He should not wait for mercy then–
Manas himself will find the answer!”
Such orders gave young Bokmurun.

Few thousand guests already gathered,
Most Turkic clans, as well as others,
The relatives, the neighbors, foes,
Kalmaks, the Persians and Manchu
The Chinese of the Khan-Su tribes
Batyrs with retinues and troops.

The ruler of the Kakancha–
Insidious warrior Konurbai
Brought all his squad along with him.
And the Manchurian Khan Neskara
With troops came into Karkyra.

Kyrgyz folk he could not absolve
The fact that many years ago
A caravan laden with tea
They captured on the road to him.
With hidden anger Neskara
Came in to ash to check himself,
The forces Kyrgyz folk possessed
In the highlands of Karkyra.

After assessing Kyrgyz camps
The Chinese khan witnessed himself
The presence of their valiant heroes
And with the secret joy he learned
The absent place for Er-Manas.

He decided to see the horses,
Prepared for races alaman.
His eyes caught sight of Maaniker,
Manchurian khan sensed a rare horse

Of the truest breed– buudan.
Neskara, Konur, Joloy,
Had counsel ring between the three.
Khan Neskara said to batyrs:
“Last night I learned the hidden fact,
Into the valley Karkyra
Manas did not come with his squad.

It seems our turn had finally come
To punish all Burut[79] at last.
Hey, Bokmurun! Come over here!
Bring me the horse I saw today!
And if I won’t see that horse here,
I'll see the end of you, Burut!”

Got the idea Bokmurun,
Memorial ash he made for father
Could turn into a bloody war.
He rushed to yurt behind the river,
Old man Koshoy was resting there.

“What should I do, my dear uncle?
Neskara threatens with violence–
He’s backed by Konurbai, Joloy.
I am afraid my father’s will,
I did not get it right at all.
I did not think about his foes
Those to whom you show your honor
Reply with enmity, revenge.

I could not predict Neskara,
Manas’ arrival to Karkyra
This would precede by ten days.

[79] The name for ethnic Kyrgyz in ancient Chinese scriptures

Recreant are his calculations,
And while Manas is on the road
The Kyrgyz tribes he wants to maim;
When Khan Manas arrives in here,
He plans to surround him with his team,
And kill batyrs all one by one.

I see now, dear uncle Koshoy,
This wake, we've started all in vain.
Here in the valley Karkyra,
A grave we're digging for ourselves"
Repented careless Bokmurun.
Wise Khan Koshoy then shared his thoughts:
"So, this is how, my childish friend,
If scoundrel puts his mind to something,
Can take your wealth and all your power.
Without flinching he'll sacrifice
His own son and even father.

At any cost they want a war,
The reason could be anything.
And if you give your horse today,
They'll find other grounds as well.
Know this my boy, they'll find a brawl!
So, my advice to you, my son:
Don't give your horse to the Chinese!

Swift messenger send to Manas
With word that Neskara, Joloy,
With them the meanest Konurbai,
Are plotting to kill you in here,
And ruin our memorial ash."
And thus the old Koshoy would write
A letter for Manas to send,
By secret path they sent at night
Heading Talas the messenger.

MANAS' ARRIVAL TO KARKYRA

Sharp on the fourth day arrived Manas
Into green banks of Kegen river;
His squad arrived with him as well,
With shouts aloud: "Manas! Manas!"
All Kyrgyz people rushed to meet
Khan Er-Manas and his choro.
With meager tear of an old man
Embraced Koshoy his friend Manas.

"Your people have been long awaited–
Their main stronghold and support!
Neskara, Konurbai are here,
The glutton-ridden fat Joloy
Arranged the raid just yesterday.

Coming as guests to our ash,
The bloody war prepared for us.
And Neskara himself demands
To give him tulpar Maaniker.
Decide the way, our mighty Khan!"
"My Khan!" meddled then Khan Urbu,
"Give them the horse, fast Maaniker!
My friend Manas, you must believe,
Or else this memorial ash will turn
Into a bloody slaughter feast!"

"What are you asking Khan Urbu?
I do not recognize you now!
Do you not know me by this time?
You want me to honor this insolent fool
And give this horse with gratitude?"
Yelled Khan Manas, so fueled by anger,
He struck kamchy across his face.

And his kamchy of folded leather
Just like the steel of a real sword
Up to the bone cut Urbu's cheek.
The blood had flown from the Khan's face.
All khans and all of the choro
Took up their swords and their daggers.

"Composure!" called to them, Koshoy.
"You fools want to kill each other?
I see, the glory, strength and power
Impaired you, batyr Manas!
When people shout "Manas, Manas!"
You are exultant, blush with haste,
Get puffed just like a hot chanach!
Know this: the one who'll praise to your face
Is an adulator and sycophant!

Urbu is the famous khan,
He was with you shoulder to shoulder,
So many times under the banner
He rode with you into battles.

And you just treat him as slave,
In front of all– insulted Khan!"
Replied to the old man, Manas:
"My Khan, I have respect for you,
I bow my head right here forthwith,
In peaceful life and in battle,
For your old age, your justice and wit!
And your Urbu forgot one thing:
I, Manas, was not born for this,
To fawn upon the enemy!"

Then Baimyrza appeared distressed
All wounded, dripping of his blood:
"Joloy himself came to your yurt,

Robbed of our goods as well as food.
All people in the yurt were tied,
And beaten from a bloody feud!
Is this the reason, Bokmurun,
For which you held memorial ash?"

"Now Khan Urbu, see for yourself,
You can't indulge your enemies!"
Said with reproach Er-Manas,
And loudly shouted: "Hit dobulbas!
Where's Almanbet? Chubak? Syrgak?
We are surrounded by enemies!

Old man, Kyrgyl along with his squad
Go round the back to the Chinese!"
"Don't rush so much, Manas! Please wait!
Don't let your anger speak for you!"
Bakai stopped him, urged to think straight.

"Our people are tired of wars,
They've led their cattle to the pastures,
Children they give birth and raise
Collect the harvest from the fields.
But if we kill our guests who came,
Great nation China won't forgive
For that they'll get a cruel revenge.
The death and war all over then!
The Earth would cover with such blood!
Again, we'd all be forced to flee
Into the highlands of Altai.

We will send people, we will talk,
And to our guests' conscience we'll call.
If they won't agree for peace,
We'll give a bloody feast for all!"
"I do agree with you, Bakai!

Let Neskara, Joloy, Konurbai
Ask my forgiveness in public display!”

But then old man Koshoy said this:
“Manas, you are so quick to anger,
I am afraid you’ll make big trouble!
Let’s send to talk with them Bakai,
Chubak, and Almanbet for now.
Kalmaks can talk in our tongue
That Chinese do not wish to speak,
If Almanbet will go to them
He'll find a way we can agree.”
Finished his speech uncle Koshoy.

With fighting squad went to the guests,
Took chapans[80] and tebetei[81] (just in case),
While Bakai, Chubak, Almanbet,
Went to the enemy to make the peace.
Learning of arrival to Karkyra
Of Er Manas with his whole squad,
To meet with these ambassadors
Came out to greet Khan Neskara.

“They’ve come after the longest journey,
For memory of Khan Koketey.
With me, our fearless Konurbai
As well with squad batyr Joloy
We’ve brought with us to Kyrgyz land
The riflemen, the wrestlers, racers,
So that in tournaments baige
We’ll show all these people our skills
And get the prizes for our wins.

[80] A coat
[81] A fur hat

We have arrived before the date,
Our horses will be accustomed
To valleys and the mountains here
Which are not familiar to us.
God willing our trip turns fruitful,"
Said Neskara making a joke.
"I've learned today to my own shame
Our youngster warriors made raid,
Took all the meat from the boilers,
As dogs, so hungry from the road!
I gave them rightful punishment.

We all are pleased with this known fact:
This memorial ash is managed
By glorious batyr Manas!
I beg forgiveness, Khan Bakai!
As sign of my sincerity
Take my own horse as yours– a gift!"
With a bow said Khan Neskara.
Bakai, Syrgak and Almanbet
Looked at each other and agreed
Put on Neskara's gift– chapan,
And tebetei from the suusar[82].
Both sides exchanged the gifts,
All satisfied with their missions.
Kyrgyz, Chinese, and the Machu,
Hid mutual venom for a while.
The jokes, the riddles, ringing laughter
Day and night, even at dawn,
Took place in valley Karkyra.
Young Bokmurun could not disguise
His tearful, happiness-filled eyes.
The leash of tulpar Maaniker
With gratitude he gave Manas.

[82] Marten fur hat

Arrival of Manas to Karkyra

THE TULPAR (HORSE) SHOW

An early morning, at the dawn,
Grazed by the tender morning breeze
Flowed the green banner of Khan Koketey.
All guests as one rode on horseback
Onto the banks of river Kegen
To see and give their estimate
The horses that were set to race.

On both sides of the noisy river
The rows of fifty waited still,
Leaving a strip right at the center
About hundred wide– big steps.
A mountain of little black ants,
The stream of people gathered here
Like it was not memorial ash
But jolly, joyful wedding-toi.
At races alaman-baige[83],
For those who come in winning places
Herds of cattle were the prizes:

Five thousand stallions as first,
The camels counted fifteen hundred,
Fifty thousand goats and sheep.

For those who kept the cattle records:
The arduous task of counting fleets.
Ninety yurts were set along
For elder people to get rest;
Each yurt had kyz[84] or jigit in it
To serve the tea and pour kymyz.
“Let in the horses!” – A shout was heard;
The Kyrgyz, Persians, and Manchu,

[83] Horse races with prizes
[84] A lady, girl

Welcomed their prized racehorses through,
The whole valley awestruck at that moment.

The Kangai maiden Orongu was shown honor
At the show her mare Kulabee came first.
And after her, with easy trot,
Came Ak-Kula, Manas' tulpar
In his best form, fit for that race,
Light and slim as a mountain goat,
Ready to race, just give him the word.

Behind him confidently went
The big, broad-chested horse– the giant
That was Joloy's Akbuudan.
And everyone had noticed then:
Two horses were an equal match,
They were like twins playing the games.
With proud step behind them pranced,
The horse of Bokmurun– Baitoru.

So after them along the river
A few other stallions followed:
Muradyl's horse– Kyljeiren,
Muzburchak's horse– Telkulon,
Chal-Kuiruk– friend of Er-Toshtuk,
Two black stallions of Khan Urbu,
From Kokchokhan– horse Kokala,
And Koshoy's horse named Chonsarat.
Close to three hundred horses trailed,
All ready for the high stakes races.

All a match for one another,
An honor to compete with each,
And race till the edges of the earth.
More than a thousand of these horses,
The ones who are better than the others,

Left for alaman-baige.
In eight days' time, right on the shot,
Back to the finish they needed to return
Where thousands of guests wait with elation–
Triumphant stallions, claiming baige.

The cunning, dodgy Konurbai,
Withheld his horse named Algara
From the races alaman,
Replaced him with a lookalike
His Algara will be so rested
In tournament of er-sayish,
His task will be an easy one–
To knock Manas off Ak-Kula
(From previous races alaman
Exhausted will be Ak-Kula!).
As a prize he'd finally get
Manas' stallion Ak-Kula!
Sending off horses into the race,
With men from every tribe there was,
All returned to their own space,
Shyrdaks they put on highland grass,
With the abundant dastorkon[85],
They started the memorial ash.
When the moldo read from Koran,
The Buddhist, Christian, and the Muslim,
All as one, repeating "Oomin",
And from the heavens blessings sent
The spirit of Koketey Khan.

[85] A tablecloth (Kyrgyz)

Horse races

They shot on golden jamby[86]
While the return of horses from alaman
They had to wait more than a week.
The pressing need for entertainment,
Games, and spectacles for guests;
They erected two tall pines
And on the thinnest silky threads
Were hung the jamby with their gold.

The people in the circle saw
The shining diamond in jamby,
And if your bullet or an arrow
Sharply cuts the cords of silken,
The diamond with a bag of gold,
Your name would claim for that precision!

[86] Ancient Kyrgyz national game. A small bag, filled with gold, silver or precious stones is hang by a horsehair, or thin silky thread, the one who hits the thread, gets the bag

The guests shot few hundred times,
Squinting their eyes, their focus zeroed,
Nobody could get hit that goal!
So Konurbai came to this game.
Ten times he shot from bow with arrows,
Then gun he took– but all in vain!

Uproarious was Neskara's voice,
The loud shout was meant to show
That he was the best of all the rest,
But it resulted in laughter.

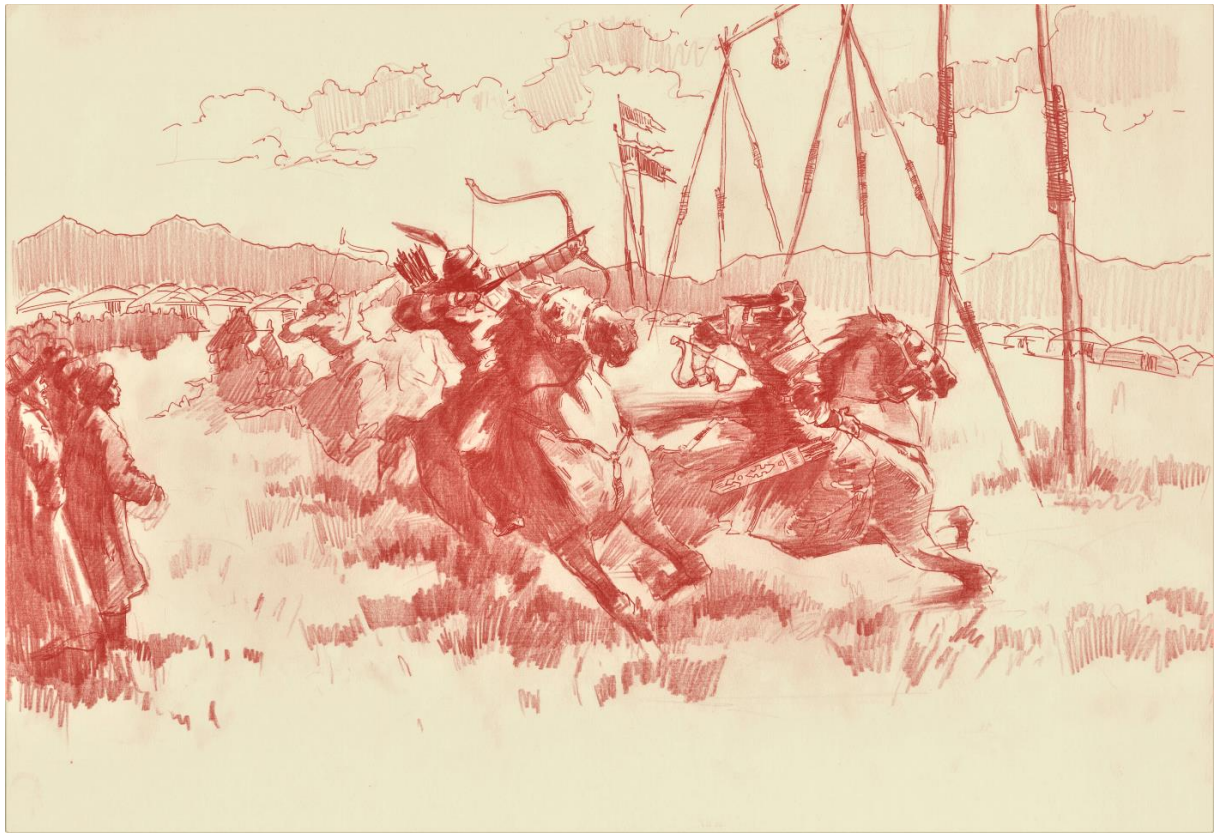
Deciding to give his luck a try,
Joloy himself in game jamby
Squinted his narrow, Kalmak eye,
He fired many times in a row,
But still none reached the target goal.
Quite self-assured giant Joloy
Was dissatisfied with himself.

Rose Er-Manas up to that challenge–
Twice roared sound of dobulbas
Forty choro stood in two rows,
Into the center came old Kyrgyl,
Threw the tebetei into the air,
Bakai shot arrows from his bow,
Once his arrow hit the mark,
The rest took their own shots to follow,
They did not let it fall to ground.
Forty choro, so skilled as archers
Kept the tebetei in the air.

This sight had satisfied Manas,
Hit three times drums of dobulbas,
Forty valiant choro
In that moment stood in a row.

Their guns they took, aimed for the target,
Into jamby shot in turns.
Rode out to the target, Khan Bakai,
On his fast-moving Bozjorgo,
Without stopping he shot,
The thinnest silky thread of jamby.
So Ajibai raced after him,
The other thread he shot on the move.
On his best friend– his horse Sarala,
Almanbet came to game jamby.
He shot the target with one arrow.
Behind him was horse– Kokala,
With a precision shot, Chubak
Another thread hit on the jamby.
Syrgak, pulled his trigger next
Another thread cut off jamby,
It was now held by just one thread,
No one had cut yet with arrow,
Until Manas himself came out
With Ak-Kelte[87] to shoot jamby.
Black smoke came from the barrel,
Into the branches and foliage,
The glittering disks of gold
Fell down heavily on grass!
Manas took the golden coins
With honor gave to old Koshoy,
He touched jamby with one hand,
"First prize- you have just won,
So let this bounty stay with you!"
For victory he'd blessed them all,
The precious prize he had returned.

[87] The name of Khan Manas' fire gun



Khan Manas's choro shooting jamby

WRESTLING MATCH OF KOSHOY WITH JOLOY

The banner of Khan Koketey
Was sighted on the morning after,
Yrchy-Uul, son of Yraman,
To the square called all of the guests.
“All hurry to balban-kurosh[88]!

The one who wins the strenuous match,
Will be so happy with his fate:
He will get a herd of thousands of heads!
So Bokmurun promised himself!”
Yrchy-Uul loudly hollered.

The argument spread in between,
Each tribe assessed their wrestling teams–
Which tribe will be so glorified?
Combatants from various countries
Did not rush to the maidan[89],
Poor Koshoy (who was elected judge)
Called on batyrs, tempting with prizes.

From the Kalmak came out Joloy,
The wheat of six batman he ate
In single seating as a meal,
All by himself in battle killed
One hundred eighty-six of men!
The banner of Khan Koketey
Was sighted on the morning after.

All smelling of meat and bozo,
His armor took off, Khan Joloy,
An enemy of any height,
Joloy could crush like they're a pawn.

[88] Wrestling match
[89] Battlefield, ring

His woven braid was just as thick
If not thicker than horse's tails.
You could give him the age of forty-five,
His sockets had two sunken eyes,
Looked just like crow's nests in their size.

The shoulder blades right on his back,
A race you could do on horseback.
The muscles on his broaden chest,
Are equal to one big, deep tavak
Which serves a meal for whole five guests–
A hot and steamy beshbarmak.

The countrymen of Khan Joloy,
Stood on their knees begging their God
For wins to grant their mighty leader.
From Turks, the Persians, and the Muslims,
Nobody went into maidan.

Impressive was the Kalmak warrior,
So dangerous and cunning he,
Almost impossible to beat.
The one who comes to that kurosh
Will face their final match in life.

And poor old uncle Koshoy
In vain called them into the ring.
He used persuasion, shamed them all,
For honor of their tribes he called,
No one was willing to take that risk,
Although young Bokmurun promised
The herd of thousands of fastest horses
For winner in the wrestling match.

Old man, completely in despair,
To Khan Manas called with this task.

“Manas, you’re strong and powerful!
We do not have another hope,
You have strong hands and you are young–
You’ll win this fat Joloy in fight!”

Koshoy

“Aba[90], you know I am so clumsy
In the art of wrestling since a child,
In any battle, on horseback,
You know I'm ready for a fight.
If I now go to this kurosh,
They will think that Khan Manas
Came in to claim all of the prizes.

And if Joloy wins in wrestling,
The shame will be for all Kyrgyz!
Or maybe, dear uncle Koshoy,
You will remind them of your glorious past?
After all, how many times did big Joloy
Fall under your own foot?
If we can’t come up with a match,
The fight will not take place at all,
Joloy will claim his easy prize!”

Batyr Koshoy was quite confused,
“I was once young, and I remember,
Joloy never won wrestling me.
Grabbing him by his folds of fat,
I threw him to ground like jolbors[91].

Regardless of God-given power,
The years, as always, took their toll.
What can I do, my mighty Khan?
It's unavoidable it seems,
Coming to eighty years of age
For me to go into maidan
And wrestle with the Kalmak Khan.

For the last time in such a battle,
I’ll stand for honor of all Kyrgyz!

[90] A respectful way to call an elder relative, an uncle (Kyrgyz)
[91] Tiger (Kyrgyz)

In case I fall in wrestling match,
It's not such shame for the old man.
I am afraid of just one thing:
My wife's hands are old as well–
She is the one who sews my trousers
From rawhide leather of a goat.

What if the unscrupulous Khan Joloy
Holds me by the trousers I have
And breaks it into equal parts?

The people watching all around,
The anatomy of my naked body
Will have to witness in that match!

I'll be ashamed– a laughing stock,
Or maybe some of you will have
From strongest leather, kandagai[92]?"
Old Khan Koshoy asked the batyrs.
Manas took out under his saddle,
From strongest leather, kandagai.

"Here are your pants, my abake[93].
Coming to ash I took a pair
Fit for this case, strong kandagai.
Just for the purpose of the fight.
Your daughter and my fair wife
Had sewn herself this kandagai.
You'll thank her later, abake,
But now aba, try it on!"

The old wrestler was still broad in frame,
These pants were narrow for his legs
Even his knees they didn't cover!

[92] Leather pants (Kyrgyz)
[93] A loving way to call an uncle (Kyrgyz)

“Where’s Kanykei? Call her here!”
Manas ordered his jigits.

The daughter of Bukharian Emir Atemir,
So beautiful, slim like gazelles,
With forty women after her,
Through rows of noisy, screaming guests,
As packs of white swans, they passed through.
“What kind of childish pants you’ve made,
Is it a joke for all the people?”
He asked his wife quite angrily.

With smile as bright as the moon,
To Khan Manas answered his wife:
“My Khan, these kandagai I’ve sewn
From leather of the wild boars,
But just in case, among the seams
A big supply of leather I left,”
Kanykei said with tender voice,
Keeping her gaze on Khan Manas.

So then two strong stout jigits,
The kandagai stretched by two ends,
So pants were stretched right for the fit,
For the kurosh, the strongest shield
Was made just for batyr Koshoy!

Old man Koshoy was very pleased,
Saw Kanykei like his own daughter,
Bowed to her, with kindest words:
“Oh Kanykei, my dear child!

For happiness our God made you,
So that your face at night, like a moon,
Enlightens the path for your spouse,

And in the day, just like the sun,
Lights up the mountains for Kyrgyz clans.

Take my request, my dear girl–
Give Er-Manas a gift of son!
In honor of our victorious days,
Give him the name of Semetey!
Manas' bloodline should be eternal,
Batyr should come after batyr
In order to defend their people!"
Old Khan Koshoy gave all his blessings
The wisest one, the silver-bearded,
Raising his hands into the heavens
He asked the spirit of Koketey
Be guardian for Kanykei.
All of the people in that yurt
Repeated words of Khan Koshoy.
This old and valiant batyr
Was ready for an unnerving match.
With honor he went to maidan,
Where huge Joloy his win foretasted.
"Old man, have you lost your mind?
Have you forgotten who am I?
Hey, look! I am the Khan Joloy!
And if you've borrowed someone's pants,
I'll make you lose them, now you'll see!"
Said Khan Joloy, making all laugh.

"I recognize you, Khan Joloy!
And I remember our kurosh
And how I threw you over the thigh,
Pressed you to the ground with my back,
And you, a windbag full of boast
You lay like a woman under me!"
Said old Koshoy, and all the people
Burst in loud laughter around maidan.

That enraged big, fat Joloy,
So he grabbed the old man by his belt,
Yet wasn't able to move him at all!
Koshoy held with his mighty hands
His rival by the elbows tight.
He managed to be free from grasp
A patch of skin he left behind.

Joloy

Tried hard each of the kuroshchu[94]
To trip one another, take on the thigh,
And use the trick of tumbling in match
But none of two fell for the tricks.
The public applauded for each throw,
Spectators waited for big wins,
The night had come. The moon had risen.

In starry valley of Karkyra,
Two heroes fought in the art of wrestling.
But none of two gave way for other.
No one of two fell to the ground.
And suddenly, Khan Joloy felt:
Koshoy relaxed, maybe got tired
He barely stood on his feet.
So grabbed Joloy the old man by the belt–
He was snoring on his shoulder!
Asleep was Koshoy, so Khan Joloy
Raised him high above the ground,
The old man he took into the highlands
And wanted in this darkest night,
To hit Khan Koshoy against the boulder!

The watching fans caused such a racket,
And yet the old man was in deepest sleep.
Manas caught up with Khan Joloy,
He yelled to Koshoy– "Wake up, aba!"
Opened his eyes then Khan Koshoy,
Assembled all his final strength,
Forthwith knocked down wicked Joloy,
By intercepting him over the thigh
And to the ground he threw this giant!

[94] A wrestler

Joloy, hitting his back so hard,
Could not get up by himself.
Over his head stepped old Koshoy.
Khans Konurbai and Neskara,
And all of the Chinese party,
Mad screams had raised over the fact
That Khan Koshoy had kicked the defeated
And then, stepped over his opponent.

The rules were broken by Burut,
He had insulted the Khan in public!
The spears and swords they all took up,
Seeking protection from the aggressors,
The simple folk rushed to Manas
But Khan Bakai intervened,
Pacified the growing anger.
For the old man's act he asked the guests
Apology, and requested to forget
All the resentment for Khan Koshoy,
Keep games and competition going!"

And later said old Khan Koshoy:
"When Khan Joloy had tackled me,
It seems he stirred with his big hands
The rigid joints I had for ages,
My joints stopped aching, I suffered long,
And I, old fellow, at that moment
With pleasure fell asleep at last.
If not Manas' loud scream,
I would not see you now alive!"
The fearless old man said with laughter.

Wrestling match of Koshoy and Joloy

COMBAT OF MANAS WITH KONURBAI

Bokmurun, son of Koketey,
Announced the final tournament.
“While waiting for return of horses
From lengthy race alaman-baige,
Let us proceed with er-sayish
To finish this memorial feast.

The prize of two thousand horses
Will gain, the one who wins this game
And add that- the horse of the defeated”
He shouted at the end of day.
Next morning all the people gathered.

The sun reached apex in the sky,
For tournament of er-sayish
No one stepped forward from either side:
This tournament involving spears
Is known for fatal aftermath.

By evening to the river came
On Algara, with spear in hand
To battle stepped forward Konurbai.
“I’m Konurbai, a Chinese khan,
Compete with me in the maidan
Where only the khan has privilege.
Such rules we have in our lands!

I call to er-sayish to compete
The Kyrgyz khan or Er-Manas!
The one knocked out of the saddle
Gives up his horse to winner’s hands”
Courageous Konurbai rattled.
(To have a horse like Ak-Kula
Long dreamed Chinese Khan Konurbai.

For that same reason he withheld
From lengthy races alaman
His horse– beloved Algara.)
His belt tied around on his neck,
Came to Manas, friend Almanbet.
“My Khan! I’ll go instead of you!
This smug, conceited Konurbai
Is my nemesis, a perpetual foe.
Let me, kind brother, at this hour
Fight Konurbai in er-sayish!
His arrogance, so overflows
I’ll put an end in front of all!
For my grievances I’ll take revenge!”
“No, Almanbet, forgive me, friend!
The people will think I was scared
And for fun on er-sayish
The two Chinese set up to fight.

The real pity is I have sent
My own horse into the race.
It would be better, brother Alma,
If your horse Sarala you lent.
In battle your horse won’t let down
My old friend, steadfast Ak-Kula!”
So Almanbet got off his horse,
And gave Sarala to Manas.

With bow appeared Kanykei
Along with forty young kelin[95]
Chapan with armor, ak-olpok[96],
Of her own stitching gave Manas.

[95] Young married woman (Kyrgyz), (here forty choros’ wives)

[96] Warrior’s clothes (Kyrgyz)

Wise aksakal Bakai had blessed
Khan Er-Manas in the battle,
For him to win this er-sayish,
The honor of Kyrgyz defends.
The mediator, judge– Koshoy
Pulled out a copper coin to call
So all the public be their witness:
Who'll start the fight, who's to return.
Manas stopped him before the draw:
"Khan Konurbai– the Kyrgyz guest.
For him we show a great honor:
Let Konurbai begin the fight!"
Taking a spear with blunted end,
Charged first Khan Konurbai:
To knock Manas out of the saddle,
Pull the shield from out his hands,
And then kill the defenseless man.
So skillful in this sport, Manas,
Brushed off the spear of his opponent.

Then came his turn, the next to move–
Ran forward charging, Sarala.
Khan Konurbai didn't blunder
With shield he turned down the spear,
With up to thirty counts in turns
The shields and spears both broke apart.
They had to move to close combat;
The spears together crossed between.

With furious cry, Konurbai,
His strongest blow he gave Manas–
Manas almost fell from his horse!
The end of spear, bypassed the shield,
Hit Er-Manas right on the side,
His ak-olpok saved him from death!

He turned his horse and, in a blink,
Delivered a blow to the Chinese.
Konur could not shield off that hit
He fell to ground just like a sack,
His heavy armor added weight.
Faster than an arrow Manas rushed
To the horse Algara, took the bridles.
The poor defeated Konurbai,
On knees, tearful, to Manas he begged:
“The people witnessed once again,
How strong you are, batyr Manas!
I bow my head. Here is the sword.
It’s up to you– cut off my head!
Let me die here right away,
But please return my Algara!”
Begged defeated Konurbai.

Manas felt pity for the khan–
The bridle he threw to Konur.
For noble gesture he had shown,
Raged in his anger Almanbet:
“Manas, you are the strongest– no dispute.
You lack some simple wisdom, friend!
Maybe in childhood there was a reason
For you to be named Big Buffoon!
Why did you give back Algara?
To our sworn, big enemy?
Did it occur to you, my friend,
What kind of evil he would bring
For all Kyrgyz, for you and me,
On such a horse as Algara?
Why, Er Manas, did you set free
A fox that got into your trap?
If you did not give back the horse,
I could have punished Konurbai!

For all the insults in the past,
He would have been avenged, my friend!
As long as this Kangai is alive,
Kyrgyz will not see any good!
You, on your own, my Khan will see,
That Algara you should have kept!”

CULMINATION OF KOKETEY'S FUNERAL ASH

Bakai called all the choro
After a week and one day passed
Since races alaman-baige.
He shared with them some joyous news:
"Manas's tulpar Ak-Kula
Was number one in alaman.
Right after our Ak-Kula
Was Khan Joloy's Ach-Buudan.

So many prizes and victories
Will cause green envy in our guests,
They might harm stallion Ak-Kula
And shoot down the horse that won the big prize.
Chinese tulpar Ach-Buudan
Is a spitting image of Ak-Kula.
I ask of you, brave Almanbet,
Wear your whole Chinese outfit
And in Chinese then scream aloud
Supporting tulpar Ak-Kula.

So our horse will come alive
And its well-deserved prize will get.
Pleased was Alma by such proposal,
He wore the clothes he brought from China,
Disguise he put on his horse Sarala,
None could have guessed their character.

The Chinese bowed to Almanbet,
Regarding him as one of their own.
He saw on foothills of the highlands
Rushing at full speed, the first tulpar
Was none other than Ak-Kula.
Right after him, like an arrow
Ran the Chinese Ach-Buudan.

Both racing horses look alike.
Just like twin rabbits on the field
You could not set apart the two.

Towards the horse moved Alma
With a loud scream: “Ach-Buudan”!
The enemies waiting in ambush,
Did not shoot Ak-Kula tulpar.
As soon as the first horse of baige
Rushed to the banks of river Kegen,
The people witnessed on their own
The young rider was from Ken Talas
And the tulpar was not Ach-Buudan,
But it’s spitting copy- Ak-Kula.

The fighting squad of Khan Manas
Rushed to guard the horse that won.
They all supported Ak-Kula,
A Kyrgyz horse came first in the race!
(Almanbet, pleased with his role
Could not have guessed the troubles ahead)
They drove Bokmurun into the valley,
The prize– two thousand heads of horses.
All of them that came as reward
Manas allotted to his squad.

Then they have served the beshbarmak,
Four people per one big tavak.
Flowed as a river for the guests–
Bozo, kymyz, and strong arak–
Victorious toi boomed in the valley,
Tired of games and entertainment,
The guests were fast asleep on the spot.
Deep in the night, in Karkyra,
The restless, angry Neskara,
Chinese khans gathered to talk.

“Why did we come to Kyrgyz ash
If none of us could win a prize?
In game jamby– no one could aim,
In wrestling lost our Khan Joloy,
Insulted him their old Koshoy.

And you, our dearest Konurbai,
Fell from your horse fighting Manas.
Today, at race, we were the fools,
And cunning cheater Almanbet–
We’ll not forget this traitorous move!
We’ve failed in every game they had.

By day audacious gets Burut,
The highlands wouldn’t hurdle him,
Their own mind they have in here!
It looks they have forgotten all
How they have fled into Altai!

Tonight we will restore in here
Our tainted honor for once and all!
Covered by darkness of the night,
We’ll give them bloodiest of ash!
Tie up jigits, kill their fighters!
Gather horses into herds,
Before the dawn descends upon us–
Drive those herds to Chinese land!”
Such orders gave Khan Neskara.

The Chinese batyr Konurbai,
The head of the kalmaks– Joloy,
And solon’s leader Ylama,
Along with them old Neskara,
Were guests, shown honor by Kyrgyz,
Having agreed amongst themselves,
Barbaric robbery began.

It was hell, complete disorder!
The raging village with a flood!
The aches from fire and from smoke
The scream of children everywhere!
The yurts were burnt, the livestock scat-tered,
Giant Joloy killed all he saw.

And Konurbai– villainous scoundrel,
Tied up and killed the Kyrgyz men.
The others drove the herds away,
The boilers, yurts with their tyundyuks,
Let down from slopes into the coombs.
And then in front of their bound husbands
Wives were raped by the Chinese.
The mothers of young girls shed tears
Watched their children taken as slaves.

The shouts, the screams, blood everywhere,
Kymyz, airan[97], and whole milk
Out of chanaches ran as water.
Such cruelty from the enemy,
No one had seen in years before!
Manas with squad was trapped between
The narrow gorge, the river's mouth,
Right where it falls to roaring Kegen.

By the time they realized the ruse,
The Chinese khans had reigned and killed.
When lights of dawn hit mountain tops,
Survivors could not hold their tears
Seeing the ruthlessness displayed:
The piles of ashes in place of houses,

[97] Yogurt

Dead bodies scattered everywhere,
As if at night, here on the mountains,
A fatal hurricane had passed–
Arranged Sodom in Karkyra.

Next morning Khan Manas gathered
All people who survived that raid;
They cleared obstructed paths by river,
The entrance to the gorge was free.
To his crowd said Khan in anger:
“Just yesterday I was convinced,
As long as I have Almanbet,
Chubak, Syrgak, wise man Bakai,
The enemy will see no mercy!
They will be smashed, always defeated!

Last night turned memorial ash
Into disgrace for all of us!
We’ve feasted more than our guests,
Like fools, we all had gotten drunk!
We all forgot the simple fact–
That enemies were in our midst,
With dreams of beating us to death!

The guards let down their vigil,
As a herd of donkeys, they had slept!
We need to redeem this great guilt,
Atone it for our nation’s honor,
Kill the enemy that fled!
Catch up with them, bring back our people,
The herds they took we must return!”
All choro, burning with shame,
Swore to rush after the traces
To catch the villains and kill them all!

But Almanbet expressed objection:
“Don’t hurry, Khan Manas, yet,
We’ve seen this failure, fault is ours.
We are in ruins, broken up,
They drove away with our own herds,
Our trusted forces all were lost.
We won’t catch up with the Kangai,
While we collect our fighting troops,
Khan Konurbai and Neskara
Will reach Chinese walls, get defense.

Fleeting turn

Those walls are reinforced and watched-
We will have failure, please believe,
Again defeat, with awful shame.
With power, forces as if now
We can’t charge forward, Khan Manas!

I overheard that Esenkhan
Found out what happened in Karkyra,
Full forces he prepares there now,
Ready to fight the Kyrgyz troops.
Just the day before yesterday
I heard the Chinese men say,
That Konurbai and Neskara
Had agreement amongst themselves
Upon return from Karkyra,
Unite their common troops in one,
And plan a march into Talas,
To crush your own khaganate!

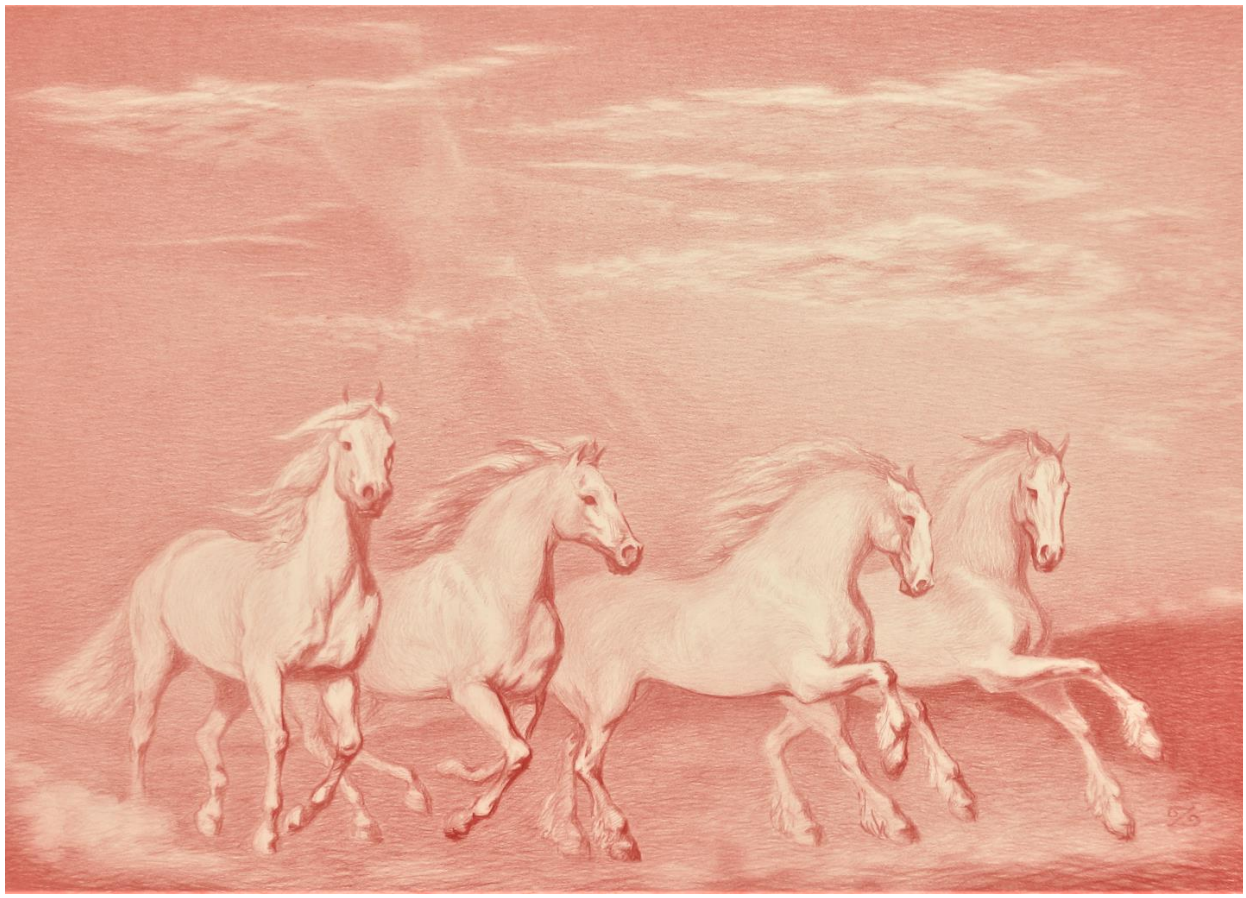
Take my advice now, Er-Manas,
Gather all Kyrgyz Khans you have
Create your powerful squadrons,
Be always ready to protect
Your own people and native land.

Or else, once Konurbai does come
He will kill khans all one by one!”
To Khan Manas gave his advice
The reasonable Almanbet.
And here, in valley Karkyra,
Just yesterday a merry feast,
No tears were shed over the dead,
Koran was read to rest their souls,
The grand memorial ash they planned
Turned into tragedy for so many!
And Karkyra, the native land,
Was soaked by tears of the Kyrgyz,
What Khan Manas started as a show
Was a fatal lapse on his account!
About it you will see again,
Before you finish reading this story.

The fears of old Khan Koketey expressed on his deathbed came true. His memorial ash (which he wanted to avoid) ended with great tragedy. Bokmurun lost all of the wealth left by his father.

Manas, by calling all his clans' rulers, as well as sworn enemies, wanted to strengthen his power. But it turned out to be his fatal mistake. The rulers of the Kyrgyz clans, dissatisfied with the sovereignty of Manas and the fact that the Chinese Almanbet became his closest friend and adviser, united with each other and decided to remove Manas from the throne.

“The fire smoldering from within is the most dangerous; the enemy that came from the family is the most dangerous” – say our wise people.



Horse- men’s wings

CONSPIRACY OF THE KYRGYZ KHANS

In mountains of the land Alai
Is the rich, fertile Kyrgyz land.
Gathered that spring six local khans
From different six clans of the south:
A glorious Khan Muzburchak,
From Andijan– Khan Sanjybek,
The son of Elaman– Toshtuk,
From Sary-Arkha– Kazakh Kokche,
From land Kemin– old khan Urbu,
And from Eshtek clan– Jamgyrchy.

All had arrived to the party,
Whispered the khans to each other:
“He called us all for Koketey’s ash,
Absolute power took Manas,
He mocked and humiliated us.
His word backed up by old Koshoy
And Khan Bakai with his whole squad.

There, we have seen no honor,
Only oppression, indignity.”
“At funeral ash he did not let
A word to say to anyone.
He showed regard to none of us,
Only his Almanbet he heard.”

“And who is he, this Almanbet?”
“A traitor to his motherland, a fugitive.
He managed to befriend Manas
By flattery and by betrayal.”
“And you, most honored Khan Urbu,
Manas struck right into your face!
In public he insulted you.
All to himself he took power!

What should we do? How did this happen?
All charge he took into his hands.
Unless we curb his excessive power,
He will turn us into his slaves.
So we won't suffer such a shame
We need to gather all our strength,
And interdict him for our sake!"

Then Khan Urbu replied to them:
"On this path I can't go with you,
I am too old, with graying hair.
My son is young. My clan divided.
I do not have the strength within,
For power struggle, to compete with him."
"Where is your dignity, Khan?"
Kokche khan shouted in anger.
"Are you the Khan Urbu we've known?
When conceited Khan Manas
Hit you right across the face,
All khans were ready to resist
This evil tyrant, just this once.

And if not been there old Koshoy,
Who calmed and reassured us then,
Khan Manas would have lost the throne,
In big trouble he would have been!"
"I see, you're fearful, Khan Urbu!
You don't possess honor of khan!
Why did you come to our council?
Are you a spy for Khan Manas?"
Kokche demanded a reply.
And Khan Urbu promised to them
For honor, dignity and power
To stand along with them till the end.
So khans decided on that spot:
Invite Manas into Alai,

Divide the guests into the camps,
Surround each camp with their own people
And steal their horses while they sleep.

Unarmed and captured squads will stay,
While they confront Manas himself–
They'll order him to leave his throne.
In case he won't give up the reigns,
The whole world will overthrow his power!

All his choro they'd execute,
Send to zindan Manas himself,
His wife they planned to take as hostage,
All people will be so informed
Manas is not a ruler for all–
For now, ashar would be in power,
Six khans from six different clans.

A mare was slaughtered for this cause,
Dipped palms of hands into its blood,
Fell on their knees and lifted hands,
To Earth and Sky they swore an oath:
The one who dares betray this trust
Will have perpetual shame upon,
And let the black hole of the earth
Take him into its womb forever!

Punish him, fertile Mother Earth–
Blue skies above will punish him!
And every khan from their own clan
Sent an ambassador with a letter.
To Khan Manas an invite was sent–
All of the khans waited for him
Along with a squad– his forty choro,
Into Alai– a fertile Kyrgyz land.

ARRIVAL OF AMBASSADORS TO MANAS

The six ambassadors were dispatched,
Six men from noble families,
For a lengthy trip to Talas River,
The place where Manas put his throne.

Once there, all eyes turned up–
The stony with golden gates
Shine under sunlight, shying the gaze.
The deep ravine filled with the clearest water,
So the enemy could not approach
And vigil guards put all around.
The ambassadors did not know how,
To knock on gates or shout aloud,
That task was eased by the arrival
Of a man named Joronchu to gates.

After he learned that all of them
Came with a message from six Khans,
He went to tell the Khan Manas
About these messengers' arrival.
After he heard the guards report,
Manas was pleased with this visit.

He laughed so loud, exclaimed to them:
"I've learned just recently from people,
The leaders of six flocks of sheep
Went to the toi Toshtuk arranged,
Came to conclusion between themselves–
Compete and take me off this throne!

The mad men want one thing from me
Withdraw the power of the khan of khans!
They dare think I am afraid
Of threats like these, indeed they do?

Ambassadors we always honor,
And treat them as valued guests.

You will receive the warmest welcome,
Accept the gifts for you addressed."
He told his men: "Let them walk freely
All around our own khanate,
And let them see– they'll understand
What kind of power we possess?
What kind of life leads Khan Manas!
And only then, lead them to me!"
Such orders he gave to guard Jaisol.
The ambassadors were led to Khan
By guards who came to golden gates.
"The leaders of six clans before
Pledged their allegiance to me.

Have they decided to play with fire?
I am so pleased! Had planned as well
To come to visit them myself,"
Manas said, reading the letter sent.
To give the ambassadors a lesson,
They treated them with high respect,
New outfits they all received
And afterwards they had a tour
Displaying power of Khan Manas.

So Khan Manas gave each a gift–
Tulpars, each faster than the last
So they would reach as a whistling wind
To each khan waiting in Alai.
And in his letter wrote Manas
To all six khans his firm decree.

The ambassadors came to Toshtuk,
And there, they read the decree of Khan:

"I, Khan Manas, the Khan of khans,
I do command you all as one,
So that in exactly forty days
With all your squads arrive to court!

The one who does not come in time,
Will face a punishment that suits!
The seal of Khan Manas approved."
Six khans were silenced for a moment
As if their mouths were full of water;
They never thought that their invite
Would take such unexpected turn!
And then Toshtuk stood up and said:
"Why dear friends are you so quiet?
I've always said and now confirm
That Khan Manas is not our equal.
And now we're all Muzburchak-aba,
In the claws of an angry lion.
It looks like scary aksakal
Had guessed intentions we had placed.

If he demands from all of us
With our armies to come at once,
Then it seems our mighty Khan
New war is planning to begin.
In case you're planning to elude
None will survive his mighty paw.

The choice is one, my dearest friends:
Prepare your troops for grand battle.
Saddle your horses, in forty days
We all need to be in Talas,"
None from the six khans could object.
Right on the dot– on the fortieth day
Six khans arrived along with troops,
Into the northern land Talas

Where Khan Manas looked for that group.

Before the march into China

GREAT MARCH INTO CHINA

On morning day of forty first
On argymak[98] – fast Ak-Kula,
Into the square came out Manas.
And twenty warriors-choro
Were at his left, each one on horse–
Each one so faithful to his Khan.
The restless sounds of dobulbas,
Like thunder shook whole wide Talas.
Our furious lion dispersed his sight
Onto each khan with killing anger.
“Lead them to me!”
He gave the order.
The khans appeared in a moment.
Before him they all stood in rows,
With trembling hands and scared looks,
Looking with eyes of timid hares.

“You, khans from six different clans,
Did you think we are all fools here?
Harsh punishment wanted to give
For those who plot behind my back,
And have agreed amongst themselves
To overthrow me from power.
I’m not your foe! Our foe is common-
The one who live behind the wall!
Our enemies– Konur, Joloy–
Who in the valley Karkyra
Turned our own memorial ash
Into the bloodshed and a slaughter!
To ruin Kyrgyz unity,
They’re getting ready for new war!
To win this war we must be first–

[98] Fast, racing horse (Kyrgyz)

Must get ahead, we must attack!
As a union, one big Khanate,
All our forces we need amass,
As one big horde we need to move
Onto a march to Chinese walls,
To save this sacred land we have!
And he who doesn't join this march
Without a head today goes back!"

The khans were quiet, all too grim
With features petrified they stood.
"Forward you go– to mortal battle,
Turn away your head– you lose.
Dare to question this decision–
Your head parts with the body's fuse!"
All of the khans aghast with choices,
In silence looked up to their leader,
Like little frogs look at a snake.

Having collected scattered thoughts
The khans spoke out finally:
"Manas, have heart, forgive us, Khan!"
"We'll follow you, for our land, for our people!"
"Lead forward us, greatest Khan!"
The agreement was enforced by moor[99] –
This sacred oath had the Khan's seal,
Pleased with support he had from khans
Manas delivered a speech:
"My heroic people, here!
Not once you've suffered from invasions,
Exiled you were from native lands,
And by the courage of your sons,
You have returned to your homeland!
But now again, my dear people,

[99] Khan's seal

Dark clouds gather over our head:
Chinese Neskara, Konurbai plan
On killing us to end all clans!

To be ahead of our enemy,
Into China we will go first!
For hatred we'll respond with hatred!
I am waiting for your answer!"
The buzz and roar, the loudest din,
All people gazed up, prayed to heavens:
"Koke-Tengir, our God Almighty!
We ask your help and your support!
Dark night had come to us again!

A peaceful life we lead, honored
Hard work in our own native land.
The khans call us into the war,
Where death and blood await for us!
They want to lead us east, to China,
Into an unknown, distant land.
No! We will not go to war!
Let all of us then meet our fate
On native land, on our own soil!
We came today to give support
To our leader from six khans.
As it turns out– we were deceived,
Got in the cunning trap we seem–
Ourselves we threw into zindan!"
Like an ocean people raged and roared.

Now Almanbet took floor and said:
"I've known these distant, Chinese lands.
What kind of man is that Konurbai?
A boastful coward, a hypocrite!
The Chinese people, on their own,
Live struggling, fighting by themselves

They have their gold, the silks they make,
Their tea and other goods as well.
Only Konur and Neskara
Have troops to fight, the rest are weak.
You have to trust me when I say
That these Chinese men cannot stay
On horseback like we nomads do.
When they see our horde on horses,
Without a fight they will surrender,
And with the goods we'll get from combat,
We will come back to our home!"
The people were silenced, yet none of them
Supported the words of Almanbet.
None from six khans replied with word.
When troops that go to battlefield
Lose harmony and mutual peace
There're always cowards and deserters.

So Khan Manas himself concluded
He'd test the strength of his own forces,
And check the loyalty his soldiers have,
Well before the big march starts.
By his habitual, naive kindness
He said the words of a sincere leader:
"Those warriors will go with me,
Who want to crush the enemy!

And those afraid of victory
Go home now without violent fee!"
In moment's time, all through the troops,
The joyous news passed fast as sound.
The shout of warriors reached the skies.
"May it be damned, that Chinese land!
It can keep goods for their own!"
"Let's all go home, dear brothers!
Our leader is kind, he gave a choice!"

“Let his name be there for ages!”
“Tengir will bless him, our Er Manas!”
The troops shouted, starting to leave.
Hold on for now! I do not get it!
When I led you all to war,
For our land, for native people,
Without flinching you followed me!

And when Manas called you to China,
It looks like you were all replaced!
If now you run, bringing disgrace,
You’ll be the victim of the invaders!
Again oppression! Slavery!
A cruel fate awaits us all!

The Kyrgyz tribes were always famous
For fearless spirit shown in fight,
And that’s the reason our glorious kind
Called this land home for centuries!
Have you forgotten recent bloodshed?
Caused by Neskara and Konurbai
Down in the valley Karkyra?
For honor and our native land
We’ll march to the enemy ourselves!

In their own den we’ll conquer them!
For humiliation we’ll get revenge!
Each man will be back after war
Alive, with riches of the khan!
On top of that, each will receive
Two fine horses– two tulpars!

From wounds and death, you’ll be protected
By strong armor in the battle!
For land, left by our ancestors,

For our people we should march
With war to east- into big China!
A glorious victory awaits!”
His warriors addressed Manas.

This fiery speech heartened the spirit
They’d all been called into this war
By their own father, closest friend!
Ready to march, screamed the squad: “Ur,” “Ah”!
(Which means “Beat all the enemies”!)
“Manas! Manas! Lead us to war!
Always with you! With you we stand!”

Manas was happy with the sight,
With love he looked unto his army,
He was so sure they would beat
All enemies who they would meet.
He raised his hand– and now again
They all got quiet, holding their breath.

“Tough, strenuous will be our path
The battles will be harsh and cruel!
Let aksakal, our wise Bakai
The lead for troops will undertake!
In peaceful life and in battle
His wise advice has always been welcomed-
His people’s shield he’s been so far.

Do all agree with me on that?”
To his soldiers asked Er-Manas.
And everyone agreed with him.
“Into the Chinese town– Chet-Beijing
The roads are known to only one–
My closest friend, faithful choro,
Valorous hero Almanbet,
He is pathfinder on this trip.

As the palm of his own hand, he knows
Whole China, every little corner.
He'll lead the Kyrgyz troops ahead
Into the strange, unknown land!"
Manas was right. No one objected.
A little light dawned in the sky,
On helmets of his dashing warriors
On the peaks of spears, they held
First lights of sun shone with a glare.

As signs of war fluttered in air
Green poles with the scarlet banner,
The enemy would fear from afar.
The army, marching into battle,
Made earth tremble underneath.

Ahead of all, on Ak-Kula,
With an impervious shield in hand,
And merciless sword Ach-Albars,
Under the scarlet banner held
Marched Khan Manas in all his greatness.
A daunting avalanche of stones
The Kyrgyz moved on their campaign.

There were loud jokes, mixed with laughter
As if a leisure walk, they made.
But his choro close friends noticed
Manas was gloomy, not up to jokes,
Nobody could reach out to him.
"What's wrong with you, our bold leader?
You look so sad, so melancholy.

Maybe to Kanykei-jene[1] we will look
Before we part?" said Almanbet jokingly.
Such loud laughter burst in air,

Manas himself also laughed:
It looks this question was expected.
Looking at his friend, Alma
He ran a hand through his mustache,
Pointed the road with kamchy.

Big womanizer our batyr!
Jokes were exchanged among choro,
Heading to the khanum for farewell toi
Upon receiving his approval.
To meet them from big Ak-Orgo
Khanysha[1] Kanykei came out to greet.

Forty young women followed her:
Just like a flock of snowy swans,
In silky dresses, all so pretty
With pleasant smiles they greeted all.
Seeing their timid, gentle looks
A constellation of the brightest eyes,
Manas's battling squad had lost
All their control – fell off their horses!
The girls, so beautiful and tender
Charmed the guys' right on the spot.

"Who will I take into the battle?"
Joked this mighty aksakal.
"You are most welcomed, our dear Khan!
We're so pleased to meet, show hospitality
To all batyrs, see off to march"
Like a gentle stream said Kanykei.

She took the bridle of Khan's tulpar
(her charms had conquered Ak-Kula),
Into her snowy-white big yurt
She opened the doors for the Khan.

When the whole squad and Khan Manas
Had plenty meat and kymyz,
Khanum Kanykei told the guests:
“My dear kinsmen, you’re headed
On a big campaign out east
To distant and most dangerous lands.

I’ve heard that people in China
Are countless like a swarm of ants,
We all will pray to God Almighty
That from combats of this campaign
You all return alive and well.
We’ve sewn protective beshmets for all,
Bulletproof be everyone.
They’re all one color– easy to spot
Our own choro, when in battle.

As symbols of our snow-capped peaks
We’ve made white ak-kalpak for each
No heat, no wind will bother you.”
Forty young women in a row
Presented the squad with combat clothes–
The goods so priceless in a war,
All dewy-eyed turned to our choro.
Anxious thoughts shared Kanykei:
“Listen, our brother Almanbet,
My farewell trust you will have.
You’re all are heading to mortal battle–
Only God knows who'll come back alive!
Into this bloody march to China
I’ve begged him not to go for long.
There Neskara and Konurbai
Together could defeat Manas.
Alas, my husband is determined
Not a thing could change his mind

Once a man is obsessed with it.
I'm so afraid, brother Alma,
That he will not come back alive.
I do not have his precious child–
He is without heir in this world.

The sweetest cheeks of my own baby
Did not caress onto my breast.
In early mornings, with lights of dawn
I haven't heard my infant's cry.
If he does not return alive,
I fear I'll go to another world
A childless widow eternally!
Both of the khan's elder wives–
Karabork and Akylai–
Did not present him with an heir.
We are a peaceful family
All bound by common destiny.
My turn I've waited longingly,
For Khan Manas to come to me,
To be with me until the morning.

Although I've waited for so long
In my big white yurt, I cried alone.
The funerals, toi, and power struggles,
Again campaign, again a war–
No time for love– some other day.

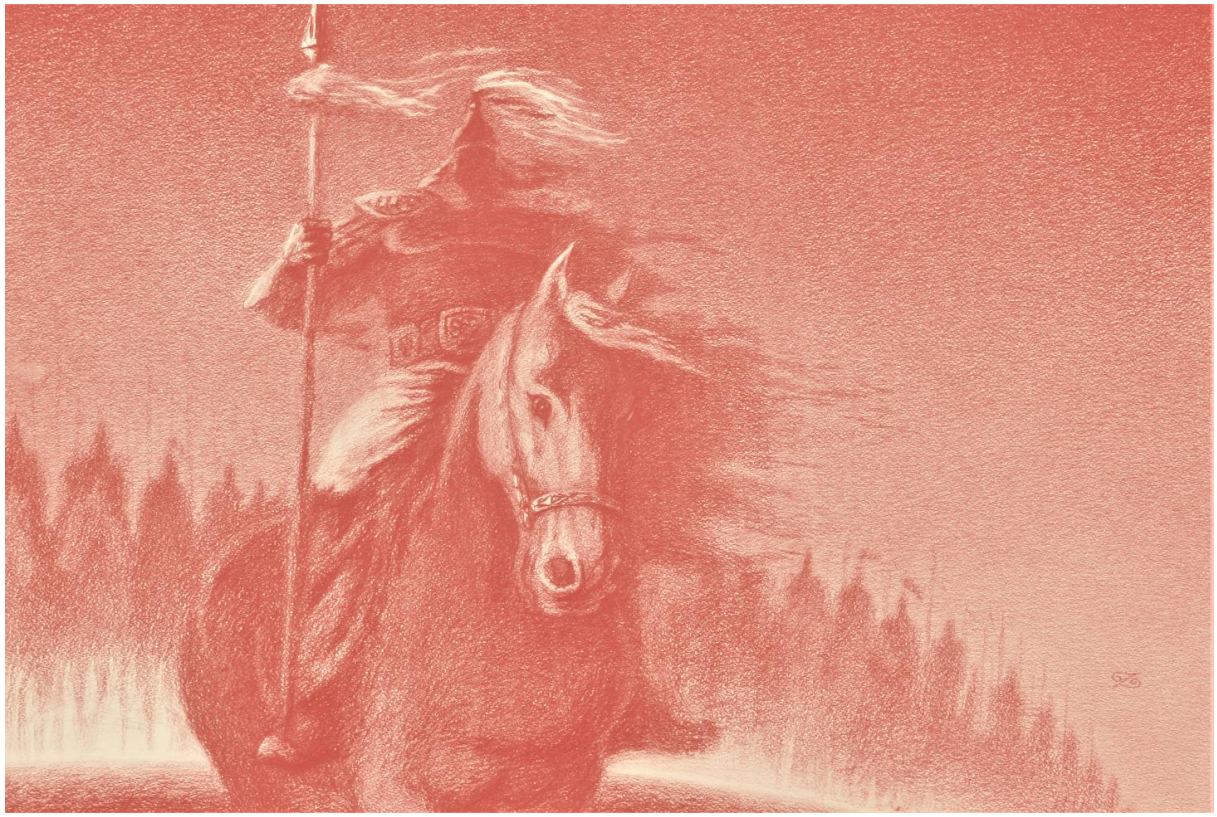
My native lands are far away,
You know, I'm Persian by my blood,
My father is Bukharian emir.
And when I leave this world for good,
Even if on the other side of earth
I will ask relatives and friends
To bring my ashes to this land,
In Kyrgyz mountains I wish to remain.

I fell in love with heart and soul
This land, these people as my own!
I beg you, dearest Almanbet,
From flying arrows and from swords
You'll shield my careless beloved!
Our Khan, in fact, is very lonely,
In angry rage he turns too cruel.
Help him avoid the fateful errors
He tends to make when he gets angry,
I beg you, keep him safe!

He's too trusting and naive,
All drunken by power of the Khan,
So sure that all hoi polloi
Are in love with him, and always loyal.
He won't suspect, our hero-khan
The ones who come so close to power
Could be infected with revenge,
Might wait in secret for the right moment
For the hour when his power is lost.
You know, our valiant Alma,
With power, we meet corruption,
Often deception walks along.

And therefore, I beg you here–
Protect our kind and naive Khan!
From a secret Judas, a cunning evil,
My dear friend, keep him away!
To you I do entrust his life–
Please bring my husband back alive!
I will be happy at that moment,
Upon my leaning onto his chest,
I'll hear it beating all intact.
I'll dedicate my life to Manas,
And the nation of the Kyrgyz people

As one he'll keep the unity,
And God will bless me in that task,"
Kanykei sobbed so bitterly.
From two bright eyes, like stars from heaven
The tears rolled along her cheeks.



Great march into China

ALMANBET IS APPOINTED AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

In the valley of Sary Tal river
The soldiers marching to the war
Arranged as one big makeshift halt.
Their spears they stuck into the ground,
Threw their swords into the bushes.

Their horses rested, grazing grass.
Some soldiers, fleeing from the heat,
Bathed in the river, some slept in tents.
Tromping the grass, forming a big circle,
They arranged the game Ordo.

Assigning big baige for wins
They played the game toguz-korgol[100].
It was as if this thousands soldier army
Was on a leisure trip for fun,
To sleep, to eat, and set baige!
Seeing all this, Er Almanbet
Was furious and went ahead
Into the camp of Khan Manas.

“Forgive me, greatest Khan of khans!
Time to turn back from our trip!
With such a chaotic crowd we’ve got
We will not get into Beijing.
And with a herd so wild like this
We will not see our wins!
And if we march into the war,
Not one returns alive from it!
I will not start this big campaign
To death I won’t lead this wild horde!”

---

[100] An ancient Kyrgyz board game

And forty warriors-batyrs
Along with them old man Kyrgyl
Not daring to say anything,
These words must have been close to home
(One saw, they were so burned with shame).

“You’re right, my brave friend Almanbet,
There is no order in our ranks.
In this campaign into China
Controlling the army was Bakai’s task.
And if he cannot manage this power,
It means, our brother grew too old.
From this day on, the chief-commander
Will lay to your hands, Almanbet!

Go to our uncle– old Bakai
And let him know of this order!”
Said Khan Manas decisively.
So Ajibai and young Serek
Went to Bakai’s camp with the news.

They respected abake, and did not wish
Him to be upset, they stood there,
Not knowing where to start.
And noticed then old Khan Bakai:
“I see both of you came
To tell us news about something.

You’re afraid if the news is bad
My order will cut off your heads.
Don’t be afraid, I’m ready to listen,
What is the order of Khan Manas?”
Gathered his courage Ajibai:
“Forgive me, please, uncle Bakai.
When started we this biggest march

You were our military khan.
Now all the power of our arms
He gave to his friend Alma."

To this Er-Bakai laughed so loud:
Before I even got gray hair
So many troops I have held!
The khan I was, was toraga[101],
But you, my friends, can well observe,
Those things did not grow horns on me!
Er-Almanbet I value high
Just as our Khan, even some more,
He's clever, cunning, brave, and valorous
A big expert in all things war.
Knows all this our Khan Manas,
He gave most a reasonable order!"
As soon as Ajibai, Serek,
Returned with Khan Bakai's reply
Announced loudly Yrchy Uul
To troops about the khan's new order
That Almanbet alone, will manage
All the military power.

"You will answer to him alone,
Both on campaign and in battles,
And if someone objects to this
His head will fly from off his shoulders!"
As soon as Almanbet gained power
The troops observed the new commander
A headcount he asked, and to be strict
He appointed new squad leaders.
The leader of ten– on bashi,
The leader of hundred– juz bashi,
The leader of thousand– min bashi.

[101] A chief, ruler (Kyrgyz)

Strict orders he gave each bashchi[102]
“Each morning start with a headcount
And end the evening same as that.
And if this count comes up short
With their own head bashi will pay.
Each warrior should know this well–
On our way we will not rest
Until the final goal is reached!”
In strictest order, all in a row
The troops continued their big march,
Through forests, fields and grassy meadows,
The rivers crossed on horseback
The nights cut short to save them time.
So for about forty days
Not knowing what is rest and sleep,
The Kyrgyz army marched out east.

Kyrgyl– the leader of the squad,
Got sick on the strenuous trip.
He grew corns between the legs,
From saddle sitting with no rest,
His butt got tired of nonstop riding.

Overwhelmed with pain and boredom
He told Bozuul, the on bashi:
“I cannot go any further.
Our Khan Manas has gone mad–
Gave all the power to that Chinese man.
He wants to ruin his own people,
Our horses are short of breath as well.
I am afraid that I will die.
On this campaign I won’t go further!
I want to reach my home alive!”

[102] Leader (bash- head, Kyrgyz)

Groaned the old and frail Kyrgyl.
His answer gave the on bashi,
Bozuul, with anger in his voice:
“On the headcount yesterday
You registered under my team!
When Almanbet will count again,
My team will come short because of you
In order to keep my own head,
I will report to Almanbet
That you, Kyrgyl died on the road!
The leader of the fighting squad,
Kyrgyl, was hardened from battles,
And brazen rudeness such as this
Offensive found the tired fellow.”
To Khan Manas he went himself.

“You, by yourself led us to wars.
And now, I do not understand,
Who’s leading us on this campaign?
And why are Kyrgyz led to battle
By a Chinese to his own country?
Give reason in your answer, Khan!
The people are tired and exhausted,
The horses are hungry, in need of feed,
The blood oozes under our saddles,
We will all die, before we reach
The city of that Chet-Beijing!
Or maybe your Chinese friend plans
On ruining us on the way?
The soldiers are completely beat–
Cannot continue this campaign!
They’ve told me all: Please pass it on
Let curses come to Chinese lands!”

After he heard the fighter's complaints,
Manas walked along the troops,
He ordered his friend Almanbet
To give the soldiers time to rest.
But first he ordered a strict headcount:
Each soldier should be in a row,
And if he sees that one is missing
The head will fly from each bashi.
The troops lined up before the Khan
Headcount was right for on bashi
For juz bashi, and min bashi–
The full three hundred thousand people!
But then the trouble came like this:
In team of ten, with Manas himself,
And on bashi was Tazbaimat,
Came short in their warrior headcount.
Chief Almanbet repeated the order:
“It means one coward has escaped.

So you, Tazbaimat– on bashi,
Was bribed, or worse– just overslept!
Take off his head!” shouted Alma.
In moments time, the six choro
Brought poor Baimat to wooden block,
Behead this bald man with sekira
They put a bucket under the block
To drain the blood of the executed.

“Hey, wait!” shouted Serek.
“Maybe, this moron Tazbaimat
Forgot to count Manas himself,
Deciding that Khan’s not a man!”
“You’re my batyr, I’m your jeldet[103]!
You did not count me in the team of ten!

[103] An armor-bearer

It means you insolent old fool
Do not consider me a man!
Why did you, my good friend Serek,
Save Tazbaimat from stupid death?”
Laughed like the thunder Khan Manas.

After permission to get rest
The soldiers fell right to the ground.
Exhausted horses they let go
To graze sweet grass on the spacious meadow.
They slaughtered mares for their meal,
Treated the people who got sick,
Few hours’ sleep was very welcomed
By tired troops after long trek.
At light of dawn came chief-commander
To Khan Manas for an advice.
“My Khan! I give you my report,
That here, at last, we are approaching
Chinese cities and the lands.

We need to find our access points,
Send scouts to probe these cities, lands.”
“The Kyrgyz does not know these lands,
To China you should go yourself!”
His answer gave batyr Manas.

“I’m ready to fulfill your order,
About one thing, though, I should ask:
To avoid the doubts in the troops,
To scout with me you need to send
A reliable, faithful friend,
Among choro he is the youngest,
But has experience in fights, -
A fearless, brave and strong Syrgak.
In China we will need the horse
Of Ajibai– named Kartkuron

That stallion is very fast,
Trustworthy for the dangerous task”
Said Almanbet to Khan Manas.

“Get ready, you have chosen well!
To scout with you, our brave Syrgak.
You will find out on this way
How we will enter Beijing
Find out the weak spots on the walls.
My fierce falcons, I wish you
Come back alive to see your troops!”
Blessed both kindly, Khan Manas.
And very soon, Alma, Syrgak
Took on the roads still unexplored
Holding the bridle of Kartkorun,
They went to probe the lands beyond.

Syrgak

THE QUARREL BETWEEN CHUBAK AND ALMANBET

Kyrgyl, now head of on bashi
Was still a sinner at age forty.
Known as a philanderer
Who'd not done good deeds in his life.

He once spread rumors among the troops,
Choro Chubak, the Khan's own friend,
Had secret meetings with Kanykei.
Learning that Almanbet, Syrgak
Went scouting into Chinese lands,

He told Chubak in front of others:
"Son of Khan Akbalta, Chubak!
I did not know you're so bizarre.
Although you are Noygut batyr,
You're worse than fugitive– infidel!
You lack the strength, my dear Chubak,
Alma rose above you fast.
Kenkol is not lesser than Talas
Chubak is not lesser than Manas!
As always, after you get drunk,
Your chest you pound, batyr Chubak,
Claiming to turn this world around.
Syrgak and chief, our Almanbet,
Went scouting lands just yesterday,
Maybe they have forgotten you
Like an old wife left behind,
Tend to the kitchen and kymyz.
Oh dear God! What a disgrace!"
Yelled sarcastically the old snitch.

"Follow me, fighters! Get on horses!"
Fired by anger yelled Chubak.
His rattle infected men.

“With bare hands I’ll slay the Chinese!”
Chubak, offended, promised such.
Quickly saddling his horse,
He rushed to catch up with the watch.
Wise Er-Bakai learned of his words,
To Khan Manas rushed the old friend
To give advice in this affair.

“Hurry up, uncle Bakai,
Until these stupid, wretched fools
End each other in pointless brawl”
Said Khan Manas to friend Bakai.
“I alone can't calm them down
You are the man to save them both!”
Answered old and wise Bakai.
Manas himself rushed after them,
To avoid the fight between
Both his close friends and bravest warriors.
Almanbet’s horse Sarala
Galloped so fast like an arrow,
And Kokchebich, Syrgak’s tulpar,
Along with them true Kartkuron
After the road of a few hundred miles,
To the river path coming down from moun-tains-
That’s where Chubak caught up with them.

“Salam,” had greeted Almanbet,
But no response from batyr Chubak.
“What has happened, my friend Chubak?
You do not give me a handshake,
Readying your sword by your side?
Did enemies attack already?
Are Kyrgyz troops caught off their guards?”
Asked Almanbet his friend Chubak.

“And you forgot, my dear choro,
An oath bound by the blood we gave–
In such campaigns and in battles
To give a life for friendship’s sake?
Or such an oath with blood and sword
To you Chinese means nothing at all?
Without me you went to scout!
You thought me a coward or traitor?
While scouting, I’d be just like you
To change allegiance, switch my side?
Or maybe, you, the Chinese slave,
Decided joining your own kind?
Took young Syrgak onto this road,
So it’d be easy for such a cheat!”
So said Chubak and bared his sword.

Boiled in anger, Almanbet:
“Enough! I’ve waited for too long!
I can't stay silent a moment more!
By blood I am Chinese, that’s right!
Both heart and soul I came so pure
To the Kyrgyz I came at first!
With China I am starting war,
With my own homeland, fatherland!

For Khan Manas, for you as well,
For all Kyrgyz to war I’m going!
I never knew that Er-Chubak
Was biased and a stupid fool!
And now, for my own honor,
Will I stand by my life or yours?
Well, my dear friend, now I am ready
To fight with you, out of the blue.”
Baring his sword out of the scabbard,
He had attacked his former friend.

Discharging his horse Kokala,
And with protection of leather shield,
Rushed toward Almanbet, Chubak.
The sword drawn from brother to brother!

In mortal combat the damask swords
Chiseled and rang in every beat
Two equal fighters met each other
Each swing of swords gave chilling promise
To leave the body without blood.

And suddenly, sounds of dobulbas,
Both warriors heard a well-known voice:
“Dear friends, did you lose your minds?”
In anger yelled their Khan Manas.
With his right hand he took the bridle
Of Sarala– Almanbet’s horse,
With his left he grabbed Kokala,
The horse of batyr Khan Chubak.
A mighty wall to shield the fight
Between the two stood Khan Manas.
“Restrain your anger, mighty batyrs!
You, like twin brothers close to me!
Each one of you my dearest friend!

When you’re together and with me,
The world I hold in my own hand.
If no agreement we can find,
Divide our people into parts,
Each clan secluded, on its own.

The rumors will spread all the world
These Kyrgyz lack brotherhood!
The clan that separates from one
Will be the food for foreign wolves!”

Batyr Chubak would not relent:
“Let go of me, I’ll end him now
The mean Chinese you love so much!
Altai's forgotten you, Manas
When we gathered all our strength,
And fought for people fearlessly.

We were about the age thirteen
I took the risks of life and death,
But all the glory from my wins
Went all to you, my dear Manas!
I’m not offended by all that:
I value you just like our God!
But then here came your Almanbet-
And you forgot who Chubak is!
And forty warriors-choro
Were as if no value to you!
You have exchanged us, Khan Manas,
For this Chinese, this fugitive!”
Expressed his grudge batyr Chubak.

“Let go of me, my Khan Manas!
I’ll kill Chubak right at this spot!
He called me traitor, dumped me in mud!”
Almanbet charged to attack Chubak.

Batyr Manas replied to both:
“I see now, my two batyrs
You’ve caused this quarrel to avoid
Going to war along with me.
Without you I’ll march to Beijing,
My slogan is but only one–
For yesterday, today, tomorrow:
Either full victory or death!
Go, I do let go of you!
Now I’ll witness both your disgrace!”

He let the bridles go and then
Silently sat on the hill.
So furious, angry Chubak
Came off his horse with a humble look,
Folded both arms on his chest.
“My Almanbet, I was wrong,
Evil shaitan[104] whispered this pride.

I acted like a stupid fool,
I cannot bare this awful shame!
Here are my hands– bind them if you wish!
Here’s the abyss– just push me down!
Here is a sword– cut off my head!
But if you could find in your heart
Forgiveness for your stupid friend!”

Without a shade of pride and anger
Asked gallant batyr Chubak.
And Almanbet came off the horse.
On his strong neck kamchy he folded:
“And you, forgive me, my old friend!
I have not taken such offense!”
Bowing like a new kelinchek[105],
Asked his forgiveness Almanbet.
This sight was seen by Er-Manas
That two batyrs, the truest friends,
In front of him, exchanged embrace.
Tears sparkled in his eyes
As if he suddenly observed
The biggest twin stars up in the heavens.

Four heroes were present there:
Manas, Syrgak, and Almanbet,

[104] Devil (Kyrgyz)
[105] Young married woman (traditionally young married woman bows to her in-laws every day as a greeting)

Right next to them noble Chubak–
Stayed on the course of their journey,
Standing on tops of Tal-Choku
Observed the city– Chet-Beijing.

From highest point you can observe
The whole of– this great fertile land.
On top of mountains clouds were near,
Herbs in the air could made you dizzy.
Putting his handheld scope to eye
Our Khan Manas saw all of China.
Busy like ants, the people ran
Leading their peaceful, daily lives.
The blooming gardens, farming fields,
The meadows saw there Khan Manas,
To his friends told Almanbet:
“And over there, beyond black mountains,
My native city– Chet-Beijing.
The main throne is there, it’s ruled
By an emperor– Esenhan.
Behind the city Chet-Beijing
The land that's ruled by Khan Alooke,
That is where his youngest son–
The greedy, fierce Konurbai stays.
And of the left– a fertile land,
A land of maiden Orongu.

Further left– the tribes Manchu,
And on the right– live tribes Solon.
Right next to them the kaganate–
These lands under Khan Bozterik.

And there, behind that stormy river,
The shores of the lake Kok-Noor–
The ruler there is fat Joloy;
So big and great the divided China!

When the flood embraced the world
And water was just everywhere,
In those years into Beijing,
The water did not reach at all.
King Solomon did not know,
Rustam-Dastan were not in here,
Even the Macedonian king
Was not able to conquer it.

Muhammad's son-in-law– Aziret
Could not influence the citizens.
Laborious people live here,
The ones with big and trusting souls–
We are not going after them,
But only that cruel Konurbai!

We must end his whole existence,
That robber, killer of the people!"
And on the top of Tal-Choku,
Wishing him all the best of luck,
Manas and Er-Chubak left
To join the troops heading this way.
So Almanbet and Er-Syrgak
Continued forward with the mission
To find the path into Beijing.

The quarrel between Chubak and Almanbet

ON THE SCOUT

They came to valley Teshik-Tash,
A place where fragrant flowers bloom
On the green, expansive meadows.
Fruit gardens blossom full,
Tea bushes grow on the fields.

Here, Almanbet came off the horse.
Face down he fell into the grass,
And started sobbing like a child:
“Forgive me, my dear former home!
Syrgak, this is my native land!
I was born here by my mother
A place where blood from newborn’s cord
The sacred soil accepted once.
In meadows here, along the river,
I used to run– a barefoot child.
And over there, under bright tent
Played with my friends as a little boy.
And do you see that yellow tree?
I planted it when I was young.
Under that century-old chynar
At night I was born under the moon.
So many troubles it has seen,
Its leaves had withered without water,
And only at the root, you see,
The green stalk taking off just now.
My mother, Altynai, told me:
'My hapless son, when you return home,
There will be a tiny sprout-
Then you should know, you’re not alone-
A son you'll bring into the world.”

Chynar’s sprout is a sign
That Aruuke, my only wife

Will give me a son this coming autumn.
The land, a place where you were born
Be always native to your blood.

Forgive me, my old friend Syrgak,
Like a child I'm crying here.
I fled this land, Syrgak, my brother,
To save my life and my mother.
They took the land, my own khanate
My years of great deeds did not save.

My father is a well-known khan,
I've never felt his love for me:
He always had a suspicious mind,
He thought, likely, I am not his.

You know, my mother was Kyrgyz,
From birth, my faith is with Muslims
When I was born, they surely say
Already circumcised like Christ.
Apparently, in mother's womb
I had recited the whole sunnah.

I cried as an infant for mother's breast,
Not like the rest: "Ma-ma, mama!"
But out loud said: "Islam! Islam!"
As you see, my dear friend,
I was an outcast since my birth.
Both here and there I was a stranger.
Such luck was dealt to me by fate!

And here, I fell madly in love
With Burulcha, Esenhan's daughter.
Suffers she here, fifth year in a row
Waiting for me, in captivity.
I heard on the memorial ash

The boasts of stupid Konurbai,
He plans to take her as tokol,
My long beloved Buruncha.

I will not stand for this from him!
Revenge I'll get for all injustice!
For honor I will give my life!
I will hug my bride Burulcha,
As my dear wife I will embrace
And after that I'll meet my death!

To me, as a child, a witch prophesied:
"The life of Almanbet is short."
If I will die here in a fight,
I beg you, my dear Syrgak,
For you to marry your jene[106] -
A beautiful, smart Aruuke.

My unborn son, to you I entrust
I know, you won't leave him an orphan,
He'll be to you just like your own,"
Finished his speech tearful Alma.
"Be strong, Alma," said young Syrgak.
Embracing friendly by the shoulder.
"Thank you for that, young brother"!
I knew that you would understand.
And now, my friend, let's carry on
With our task we have at hand!"
From his kurjun[107] took Almanbet
A Chinese embroidered beshmant[108],
And put on his friend's head
A traditional Chinese hat.

[106] An elder brother's wife (Almanbet is asking Syrgak to marry his wife Aruuke, since he feels he will die soon)
[107] A bag
[108] A coat

It was as if choro Syrgak
Was a noble Chinese working man.
And then he put on his chapan
The one he wore once as a khan.
And they continued on the journey
As young Chinese, returning home.

Along the mountain trails they walked,
Two broad rivers they had crossed:
Both Shat-Kechu and Tash-Kechu,
Still bridgeless stayed the loud rivers
Just like Alma remembered them.
And finally, they reached the valley,
A place, where for centuries
The Chinese people grazed their herds.

Closer they reached, the main shepherd
Came to greet these two travelers.
The shepherd's name was Karagul.
He lived in valley Karkyra
Where Konurbai and Neskara caused
A slaughter and big robbery;
The herds of horses drove away.
Alarmed, Karagul asked many questions:
“Where are you from? Why did you come?
I know each person in this district,
Yet haven’t met you two, fine men.”

“I’m going to town Chynmachyn.
The ruler of the Kongur tribe.
My brother– a well-known Khan Burgur,”
In Chinese tongue replied Alma.
“And who is this going with you?
Don't these clothes seem too tight for him?
He stares at us, not saying a word,
Or is he deaf, maybe a mute?”

“He is the son of the Burut leader.
When this poor fella was newly captured
He swallowed his tongue out of fear.
The clothes I gave him at that time–
He was so lean, like a shaitan[109],
And then he grew fat like a swine–
His coat is bursting at the seams,”
Almanbet answered jokingly.

“You hold a stallion's bridle there,
Are you taking it into the market?
Do you plan to exchange for tea?”
“I got this horse as a trophy
After destroying clan Kyrgyz.
Their horses we took in our possession.
We’re headed to the city of Tuansha,
And we will be back in no time.
New friend, will you look after him,
You’ll get tenge for that work!”

He pulled the bridle from the stallion,
With his kamchy hit on the croup.
After he saw his native herd,
With gallop rushed fast Kartkuron
To get a whiff of his own mares.
The whole herd recognized their leader–
Kartkuron, inbred stallion.

Deduced then quickly Karagul
That Almanbet had cheated him.
He also struck with a kamchy
His own horse Toraigyr,
Creating storms of dust behind
He rushed to his khan to report.
They did not go after him,

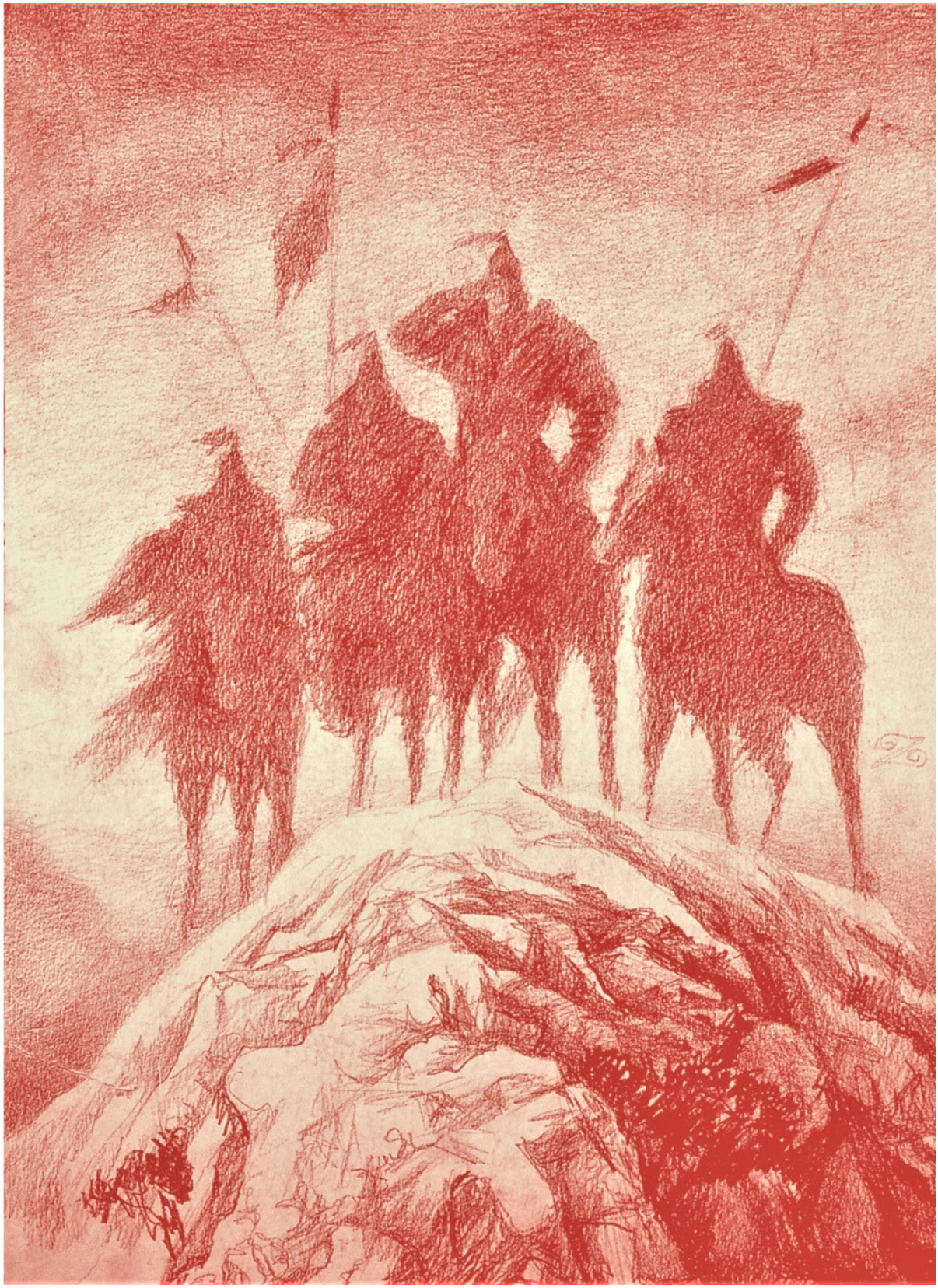
[109] Devil

The task at hand was take the herd,
Deliver it to rightful owners.
Syrgak tapped upon his shield
(A signal known to their horses)
And then the clever Kartkuron
Drove the herd into Karkyra
Where grass like feathers spread on meadows;
The scent of highland flowers call,
And roars the mountainous Kegen River.
Impossible in a thousand years
To find a replacement for Karkyra!

"We'll leave our scouts on this spot,
Turn the attention on the others:
What keeps Manas and Chubak busy,"
They took a break near Maral River
And waited for their scout's return,
To young Syrgak and Almanbet.

"Go get them, my dear Chubak,
Maybe some trouble they've encountered–
Unable to reach us, needing help,"
Worried Manas shared with his friend.

Chubak rushed right onto the road,
To find batyrs and learn their state.
Manas himself lied down to sleep:
Three nights, three days they were on saddles
Without rest, facing fatigue.



Tal Choku

THE BATTLE BEGINS

To Chinese khan rushed Karagul
Informed bloodthirsty Konurbai
Of cunning Almanbet's return
And how he lost the herd to him.

“That traitor and the fugitive
I will pierce through with my own spear,
Or better yet, keep him alive!
I'll take him to square tied up,
I will behead him publicly!”
His wrath was shared by Konurbai.

In a narrow gorge hid Alma, Syrgak
They planned arranging blockage there
They'd kill the Chinese squad themselves,
Konur as hostage they would take,
Suggests his father Esenhan,
They will return his son alive
If he surrenders Beijing.
Chubak, having rushed back to Tal-Choku,
Saw China from the mountain peak.

Far from the city of Beijing,
With dust and wind right behind him,
Bloodthirsty Konurbai and squad
Was rushing to the gorge full speed.

At full gallop turned back, Chubak,
He rode like mad to Khan Manas.
“Wake up, my Khan!”-Yelled Er Chubak,
But slept like a dead man, Manas.
He did his best to wake him up,
Lifting his head, he shook in vain,
He even tickled under arms.

Completely desperate, poor Chubak,
Struck his kamchy with all his might
On his Khan's back to wake him up.
And only then batyr Manas
Opened his eyes from deepest sleep.
“And what has happened, my Chubak?
Still sleepy, scratching back, he asked.
With scorn he looked upon his friend
As if he woke up in jailoo.

“Alma, Syrgak are both surrounded!
And here you snore and dream the dreams,
As if you were in your Talas,
Lying in the arms of your loved wife!”
In anger shouted Er-Chubak.
And so they both rushed off at once
To help their friends– Alma, Syrgak.
Avoid their capture by their foes.

In narrow gorge, along the river,
Without sparing their own lives
Two Kyrgyz warriors had fought,
Already crouching on the sides
Crawled the Chinese to capture them.

And seeing this, our Khan Manas
Ordered Syrgak return to troops,
Convey the message to Kyrgyz squads
To march to city Chet-Beijing.
Out of breath rode Er-Syrgak,
To his own troops he came with orders.

But all he spoke: “Ava, ava[110]!”
From fear he had forgot the words.

[110] Uncle (Kyrgyz)

“Are you alright, my valiant Syrgak?
You've lost your speech fearing some danger
Gather your spirit, give us the message!”
Old man Bakai demanded firm.
“We found our horses near Beijing
Into the herd we drove the stallion
Our own brave Kartkuron,
He led the horses to Karkyra.
But then that damned Konurbai
Surrounded us on all the sides.
I fear before we arrive,
Our batyrs will not be alive!”
Drew the picture Er Syrgak.

“Keep quiet now, my young Syrgak!
No one present should hear this news,
That Almanbet, Chubak, Manas
Fight now, surrounded by Konurbai.

If men hear word of this real matter
We won’t retain here our troops,
Like hares, everyone will scatter.
Believe me, none of them will go
Into Beijing with you and me!”
And so Syrgak and Er-Bakai
Came out to troops, cool and collected.
Syrgak told the news as such:
“Chet-Beijing is in our hands,
Khans Konurbai and Neskara
Surrendered freely Manas.

Their wealth they offered to our Khan,
Beautiful girls and widows.
To take for us all of a sudden
We just did not have enough hands”
Finished telling his news, Syrgak.

Right after shouting “Ur”! and “Ah!”
The horde rushed toward Chet-Beijing,
Each one wanted to snatch the goods,
To eat, to drink, be entertained.

Raising the banners over heads,
Under the loud dobulbas beat
The sounds of choor, kernei, surnai[111],
The Kyrgyz troops marched into China.
And here, Manas, Alma, Chubak,
Surrounded in the steepest mountains,
Felt a tightening ring around.

Their troops led here to battlegrounds:
Ferocious warrior Muradil,
Wearing his red cap, Neskara,
Joined them Kalmak Khan Ushan
And clever one– Khan Boronchu,
A maiden-warrior Orongu,
The Kalmak leader– Khan Joloy,
And Manchu warrior Bozkertik.

The spears were like the thickest forest
Glittering with steely blue,
The banners from the thirty clans
Hastened in air over their heads.
Above was only endless blue,
Below the steeps– a roaring river,
Approaching enemies around.

To Kyrgyz offered Konurbai:
Without spilling blood in vain,
Manas should accept peaceful surrender
Give Almanbet to the Chinese

[111] Woodwind Kyrgyz musical instruments

So Khan Manas and his choro
They will not kill in return.
But Khan Manas should take his troops
Go back to Talas without the fight.

“If you won’t agree with us
We will capture you all alive,
All heads will go onto the block
For public execution now!”
Shouted batyr Khan Konurbai.
Alma said then to Khan Manas:
My khan! We have no choice!
I will surrender to Chinese,
Allow them to cut off my head!
That’s the only way I’ll rescue you,
And batyr Er-Chubak!”

“What are you saying, my dear friend?
I do not understand your fear.
We will be fighting, Almanbet!
My slogan for now and future:

Either our victory or death!”
Answered his friend Manas.
And then like little ants of earth,
Dark locusts swarming in a cloud,
The enemies crawled on the slopes.
The three batyrs that stayed on top,
The first rows of enemies had reached.

The battle gave them three batyrs!
The blood flowed into streams,
The flying arrows and the spears
Dug into shields, dented helmets.
The forces were beyond unequal:
The circle tightened closer, closer,

To take batyrs to captive hands
When bursted suddenly aloud
Familiar sounds of dobulbas.

Looked down Manas to where it came:
Like thunder or a mountain flood,
A powerful steppe hurricane
Ready to wipe from the face of earth
With furious calls: “Hooray, hooray!”
Against their foes charged Kyrgyz troops.

Quivered the land of the Chinese
Under the banner of tribal clans,
The leader of Kazakh– Kokcho,
The Kypchak batyr Er-Toshtuk,
From Andijan came Sanjibek,
Jamgyrchy– head of clan Eshtek,
Young Bokmurun from his Tashkent,
And next to them brave Khan Urbu,
The forty warriors-choro
Led into battle by Kyrgyl,
Right next to them– Bakai, Koshoi,
Leading the troops to mortal battle.
From early morning till late night
From night till morning, then again,
A massive massacre took place.
They fought, without sparing lives,
A mountain of corpses came too fast,
The bloody river turned too quick.
The cursing, crying moans of wounded,
It’s hard to know just who is who.

Chubak caught up with Khan Joloy,
Pierced him clean through with his spear
And then the Chinese Khan Ushan,
Planted a spear to Chubak’s side.

Friend Almanbet arrived in time–
The head of Khan Ushan cut off.

His city to protect, came out
A Chinese giant– Madyhan,
A clumsy one, fell into trap,
The scary man met his demise.
Found their death on that field
Both Muzkindik and Ylama.

And so they came right face to face,
Batyr Manas and Konurbai.
Swung Khan Manas a hit with sword
And injured his opponents' shoulder.
Rushed to the walls of Chet-Beijing
Behind him, all the Chinese troops
Fled in panic after their leader,
The other one– Khan Neskara,
Could not stop troops fleeing the field.
The Kyrgyz rushed right after them,
And chased them all up to the wall,
The guards were vigil at the gates,
Letting their own troops inside
Closed their gates tightly from the horde.
The council held, agreed on one:
With three-ring locks enclose the gates
And let their warriors catch breath.
Upon their careful headcount,
All on bashi and juz bashi,
Each leader came with the report:
The count of dead more than alive.

Batyr Alma had noticed quickly:
Chubak was not among the living.
He could not envision how
His friend Chubak was not alive.

In every gorge and in the fields
Where yesterday combat took place
They searched for signs of Er-Chubak.
In early morning, just at dawn,
Chubak with Neskara appeared.
The neck of his enemy tied to saddle
He led the Chinese Khan as captive
His whole squad captured by him too.

"You're alive! "Here I was mourning you!"
Rejoicing, Khan Manas had laughed.
"Wasn't it you, wicked Neskara,
Who planned the slaughter in Karkyra?
And tried to kill me, take Talas?
But now I see, my dearest khan,
You found yourself tied up and captured?"
Exclaimed in triumph batyr Manas.

"The victory was yours in fight,
The will is yours to kill me here.
But if you spare my life today,
I'm ready yours to serve you near.
My treasury I'll give to you,
Young beauties on this land are yours,
I will present you all my lands.
I beg of you of only thing:
Do not kill me, kind Khan Manas!"
The captured Neskara pleaded.
Manas was touched, but then remembered
The memorial service in Karkyra–
He drew his sword from the scabbard.
But Almanbet, just standing near
Halted Khans hand from execution:
"He could be useful to us, Khan!
For Khan Neskara we'll be offered
Ransom from father-Esenkhan!"

Battle begins

The plan was made– go to Beijing
Appointed envoys were Khan Urbu
And shrewd, insightful Ajibai.
As an interpreter they took
Manas' faithful ashpozchu[112] –
The Chinese master Shiykuchu.

On the golden throne of khans,
Reception gave them Esenhan.
To left and right of his throne stood
Khan's men– Aijanjun, Kunjanjun
They froze there, both attentive, quiet
With bows, listening to envoys.

[112] Cook, chef (Kyrgyz)

The Chinese chief Shiykuchu
Had served Manas for many years.
He told the leader, Esenhan,
That Burut Khan, the same Manas
Could be aggressive, strong and deadly
He's capable of conquering
Not only their celestial China,
But all the world, corner-to-corner.

To save the city and the people,
There's only one way out of this:
Give up the city Chet-Beijing!
With highest honors Esenhan
Came out to greet Manas, the Khan.

"You've won all battles, batyr Manas!
I will give up the reigns to you!
Don't ruin the people and the city,
Our holy temples and our shrines,
I beg of you, do not destroy!
I'm giving up my throne to you,
But please fulfill my one request:
Give me back Neskara alive,
And the rest of khans captured by you.
For fallen warriors in battle
My big kun I will pay now!"
Khan Esenhan pleaded Manas.

At feet of Khan Manas, they rolled out
Golden threads embroidered carpets,
They put a crown upon his head,
Placed him on carriage, raised above,
And carried him to central palace–
The throne he took of Chinese khan.

From all of China, every realm,
To Khan Manas they came and knelt,
Kalmak, Chinese, and the Manchu.
Generous gifts they did present
With softest smiles, endless bows,
To Khan Manas they swore allegiance.

And when he did parade on square,
The people cheered and they rejoiced.
Manas was so proud and convinced,
All of China captured! Conquered!
Achieved his own goal, Almanbet,
The dream he dreamt for many years:
He did return his treasures, lands,
Married his long love Burulcha.
And celebrated, Esenhan,
At wedding, his new son Alma:
Forgetting grievances and hate,
New bonds of family they tied.

Almanbet's Prayer

And three jigits with Shuutu
Rushed to inform their land Talas
That Chinese city Chet-Beijing
Was captured, quelled and fully conquered–
The Chinese throne, took Khan Manas!
Hearing these seemingly good tidings,
Was not so happy Kanykei:
"Taking the city Chet-Beijing,
And taking the throne of their khan,
He had condemned himself to death.

Ask him to rush back to his home-
His son– Semetey – waits for him!
And if he dies on foreign land,
The father of my only son,
My Khan and my beloved husband,
Our only child will be orphaned,"
Shed bitter tears Kanykei.

Into Beijing rode Shuutu,
Suyunchu[113] he brought to Khan Manas,
His son was born just recently,
The name they gave him– Semetey,
And Kanykei, his wife had asked
Of his return to land Talas
Where all the Kyrgyz people wait
And count the day when they will see
On native land their victorious heroes!
Did not Manas pick up the prayer
His wife had asked him in a letter?
Instead, he gathered all his squad,
His speech was such, and spoken proud:
"In this campaign I was a strict khan,

[113] Good news, reward for bringing good news

Could not be gentle, otherwise
The victory would not be ours.

Against your will, campaign I led
To China, the most unknown land.
With price of blood and many deaths
For our fatherland, we fulfilled
Our filial duty: the enemy is destroyed
And lies defeated at our feet!

When people have unity,
They become invincible to all!
The big campaign is finally done–
At ease my warriors, take pause.
The newly married, aging ones,
The ones who got sick on the road,
The wounded men from the battle–
I give permission to go home!
Kyrgyl with fighting squad will stay
On Chinese land with me for now."

"Praise the greatest Khan of all!"
The warriors cheered him all around
Without wiping their eyes from tears.
A farewell toi took place in the palace.
And then Bakai, old man Koshoi,
Manas' father bai Jakyp,
Elaman's son, Er-Toshtuk,
Chubak's father Akbalta,
Onto a caravan of camels
Loaded the goods gained in the battle,
And moved to native land Talas
Where people waited their return.
Did gullible Manas not know
That the surrender of the city
Was just a ruse, a canny plan?

A ring would form around the city,
Each citizen would take up arms,
Surround the central palace then
Kill all that's left from the Kyrgyz.

Evasive, cunning Konurbai
Gave order to forge every weapon,
With deadly poison, rub each arrow
As he waited for that hour.
After he learned that many fighters
With goods had left to far Talas,
The guards in palace had been weakened,
He began to follow Manas,
To learn his habits, then to kill.

Manas's servant, Shiykuchu,
He managed bribing secretly.
Kalmak that went by name Manju,
Had shaved his braid on top of head,
And just like a vagabond Muslim
He started wearing a turban,
Old cane he took into the hand,
And like a beggar, in the morning,
He went to central Beijing palace.
And here that venal Shiykuchu
Fresh bread gave into beggar's hands,
Same moment that Kalmak Manchu
Went running up to his own khan.

Konur broke that bread into half,
Finding the note in there, he read
That every morning Khan Manas
Goes out into garden to read namaz[114]
For holy daily ritual.

[114] Prayer ritual (Islam)

He doesn’t take the guards along,
The plan was made– to reach the garden
And kill Manas praying alone.
Konurbai rushed to central palace,
Old men Kyrgyl and Akayar,
Appointed guards of khan-sarai,
At early dawn were sleeping well,
And did not see how Konurbai
Broke into premises himself.

Appointed guard over the garden
Was Ajibai on that day,
He was so sure that not one soul
Could pass through guards Kyrgyl, Akayar,
Sticking his spear in the ground,
Ajibai dozed off in the saddle.

To read his early morning prayer,
Went batyr Manas to the river.
He put his hands into the water–
A washing ritual he started
According to rules of sharia.

Just lightly dressed for early hour
In most sincere prayer he asked,
Raising his hands toward the heavens,
He asked the Lord, mighty creator
To keep his victories over all evil,
Return him alive to his own homeland
So finally, there he’ll meet his son.

MANAS'S PRAYER

Almighty God! You're my creator!
I'm on my knees before you praying.
Giving the sun over our heads,
You lighten up this earthly world;
Seizing the light before each night,
With darkness you leave us, my Lord.

The holy prophets and the sages,
You give to us yourself, creator.
The brainless, stupid, worthless fools
You send on earth yourself, my Lord.
To live in war, in constant struggle
You send us enemies to fight.

Giving the heart a flame and love,
The heroes you create yourself.
The maker of both earth and heaven,
You, and only you can judge!

I led your sons into the battles
To save their children and their wives;
You gave your blessings on my way,
I'm grateful for your grace, my Lord!
In battles I shed human blood,
I've lost my brothers, friends in there,
I ask forgiveness for these sins–
So ruthless was my time on earth!

My sole creator, I ask you please,
Keep people in strong unity!
Let it be fruitful and extant,
Let numbers grow and always fed!
Let bins be full in grain and feed,
For people's life and liberty

Don’t let the enemy encroach!
And let my people for a thousand years
Live peaceful, not knowing sorrows!

Let there be a khan, who takes the throne,
Like me, with endless love for his people!
And land, left by our ancestors–
He keeps, protects from enemies.
Give honor, wisdom to the old,
Affection and kindness to the mothers,
Pure conscience, courage to the sons,
And prudence to the daughters, Lord!
For our people to live in peace,
They gave their blood and precious lives
The faithful sons of Kyrgyz clans!
O-o-min!

And at this very serene moment,
The villain Konurbai crept up–
Struck with a spear Khan Manas…
Hearing the loud cry of his Khan,
Guard Ajibai woke up at last,
But cowardly Konurbai was gone.

Came back to Khan, guard Ajibai,
Pulled the spear from out his back.
To call, came running Almanbet,
He stopped the seeping blood from wound.
But broken end of fateful spear
Stuck deep in tissue of the Khan,
No one was skilled to take it out…

THE DEATH OF THE BATYRS

A rumor spread all over China
That Khan Manas was gravely wounded.
The Kangaian spirit quickly roused.
For Konurbai and Neskara
The long-awaited hour had arrived.

In rows of three surrounding the walls,
Making sure that no Burut
Would leave the city breathing air.
To banish all the Turkic tribes
Common rebellion they raised.

And now in city of Chet-Beijing
A hundred thousand soldiers went
Against the Turkic, Kyrgyz troops
To capture them, and then destroy.
Raising red banners of Khan Manas,
Shouting the call: “Manas!” “Ur-ah!”
The fearless hero Alma led
Kyrgyz troops into the battle.

An unexpected harsh rebuff
Caused the Kangaian to retreat.
Neither Aijanjun, nor Kunjanjun
Could contain the Kyrgyz troops.
But here he came with combat units
Konurbai, joined the Chinese
As all of China followed him.

And like a mighty ocean storm
The people went into that war–
Now started that merciless battle.
All merged as one in frightening chaos–
The horses, warriors all screamed,

The earth was covered with their corpses,
The sea of blood painted the land.

In dust, in fire, in chains of smoke,
It's hard to spot a friend from foe–
Fought the Kyrgyz, Chinese, Manchu.
Thunderous cries, moans of the wounded,
The sounds of terror from all sides!

Killed in the battle with his tulpar,
Koketey's son– Bokmurun,
His slayer was that Kunjajun.
Under the hail of Chinese arrows
Almanbet fought valiantly.
Anjajun's order was to catch him alive.
The young Serek rushed in to help–
Aijajun's head cut off by sword
The Chinese tried to throw the net
For brave choro– Syrgak in a circle,
Syrgak's horse– fast Kokchebich
Was not so easy to be caught.

To left and right he beats with hooves,
The rider cut the net with his sword,
The team with Muzburchak as leader
Rushed to rescue their choro,
They cut the grid– now free, Syrgak.

And the forty warriors-choro:
All Ajibai, and Jamgychy,
Almanbet, Chubak, Syrgak,
And Khan Kokcho with Muzburchak,
Khan Sanjibek with Khan Urbu–
As one they fought until their death
To keep Beijing in their control.

And here, to ranks of Kangai troops
Joins the hunter Shipshiydar–
The most precise shooter– kozgo atar[115] .
High-skilled, even on horseback,
He shoots the mark right in the eye.
Holding his wounded, aching shoulder,
The valiant Khan Kokcho had fought.
From him escapes Kangai Kunjajun.
When Khan Kokcho caught up with him,
That Shipshiydar was there as well,
With hands familiar with precision
He hit Kokcho right on the spot.

At khan's headquarters Muzburchak
Had locked with soldiers, Neskara.
Losing his comrades in the battle,
Neskara fought clumsily.
And here appeared Shipshiydar–
Made Muzburchak part with his life.
So bravely fought our Er Syrgak,
Konurbai he knocked from horse–
Took Algara by bridle then,
But stumbled, winged Kokchebich
And Er-Syrgak fell to the ground.
Be damned that shooter Shipshiydar
He spotted hero Er-Syrgak,
The arrow shot into his head.
There fallen hero Syrgak.

To save his friend rushed Kokhebich
Into the mountains– yet alas,
Fast arrow reached him on the back.
Batyr Chubak was all surrounded,
His sword was fierce, the order was

[115] Shooter, who never misses his target. Literal translation - "eye-shooter" (Kyrgyz)

To catch this choro still alive.
The Kangai soldiers threw a net.
But Er-Chubak was not a blunder–
With bare hands the net he broke.
All of his marksmen to the spot
The hunter Shipshiydar has brought–
The master to set mark and kill,
ordered release of a hail of arrows,
That's how our valiant Chubak was killed.

Uneven battle was for them,
Batyr Serek– Manas' leopard,
Had fallen also in the clash,
Like ants, the numerous Chinese.
With his life, parted Khan Urbu,
Right next to him fought young Aidar–
The strong and mighty Akayar,
The marksman, faithful Akjoltoi,
And Sanjibek– Khan of Andijan,
That war had killed so many heroes.

Now Almanbet stood all alone.
The worst was being caught alive,
Alma decided at that fateful hour,
Let go his horse– his close friend,
And pierce his chest with his own dagger–
An ancient Chinese ritual.

But Shipshiydar did not let him
Kill himself with his own hand,
The hunter shot a single arrow,
Which hit the neck of Almanbet.
Alma's friend– faithful Sarala
With dead batyr galloped so fast,
No one was able to catch up.
Yraman's son– Yrchy uul,

Sobbing, gave Khan Manas report,
The truth that many glorious and brave
Batyrs had fallen on the field.

The wounded Khan could not hide tears:
“Why should I live if my batyrs
Have fallen in the battle here?
I’ll follow them, my brave choro!”
And overcoming grievous pain,
He ordered to saddle his Ak-Kula–
Into the last and mortal fight
He led his whole remaining army.

When Chinese marksmen came in close
And shot at him hundreds of arrows,
Not one was able to cause harm–
Strong armor saved the wounded Khan.
And Shipshiydar decided quick
To bereave Manas of his steed–
Into the neck of the faithful horse
Dark arrow shot that Shipshiydar.
Fell to the knees Manas' dear friend…

Battle

RETURN FROM THE GREAT MARCH

On one cloudy, gloomy night
In tears Kanykei woke up,
Taking her infant into arms,
Sobbing, she gave him breast to feed.

Recalling a nightmare, she had,
Could not restrain herself from crying.
Near the river was a gray calf,
All of a sudden, she cried like a child–
It might mean Almanbet was dead.

A white falcon was flying high–
Abruptly, both his wings he broke–
Maybe, choro Chubak's in trouble!
Chinar tree, standing at full height,
Collapsed to the ground in that moment–
Could it mean Syrgak was not alive?

Manas' throne had fallen apart,
The legs, bent, all of them at once–
It meant faithful Ak-Kula was dead.
And if our great, heroic father
Without his horse would face a fight,
A cruel end awaits for him:
He would not come to us alive!

The dream she had that gloomy night
Deciphered so, wise Kanykei.
And if Manas and faithful squad
Did not return from war alive,
Big troubles faced the common people.
As always, a struggle would break out–
Each clan would fight for power again.
The lack of worthy, strong leader

Would cause internal feuds and blood.
The heir was just so newly born,
He wouldn't grow up so soon to rule.
The brothers Abyke, Kobesh,
Won't wait for the demise of batyrs,
They want to divide Manas' power
Into Khan's treasury they want
To dip greedy hands up to their elbows.

The united nation and stronghold
Manas created by price of battles
Would perish, all turn into dust.
Exile again, in disarray,
The plundered nation has to go,
Again, forefathers land abandoned.

"Uncle Bakai! Please hurry now!
Here is a letter, and a horse for him–
A racing horse, named Taiburul,
In battles he's a true duldul[116].
Let our father, my beloved
From that disastrous, strange country,
Alive and well return back home!
His only son awaits for him!
Go, dear uncle, quickly now!"
The best trained battle horses
Sent Kanykei to distant China.

Together with his fighting squad,
Through thick forests, deserts, mountains,
Back to the most mysterious land
Raced Khan Bakai to save his friends.
The horses he rode to a sweat,
He raced for thirty days and nights.

[116] Fast, battle horse

And so, he reached the Yellow River,
The Chinese called the Huang he.
He saw, eyeballing pitch-black darkness:
Right in the valley, between the mountains,
Sparkles of the myriad stars,
Surrounded by dark, dense forest,
Its shadow closing up the skies.
Coming close he realized:
The enemy enclosed Manas,
It wasn't stars, but the bonfires,
The dark, dense woods were Chinese troops.
They waited for the lights of dawn,
To tighten the circle around Kyrgyz
And kill each one, including horses.

But the ingenious Khan Bakai,
Found the path, not known to others,
Unscathed he passed to Khan Manas
In front of him he did appear.

He brought with him the battle horses,
Handed the letter from Kanykei.
And Khan, after he read the letter,
Learning his son is waiting him,
Manas could not restrain himself,
His happy tears he couldn't hide,
That dear letter, like a child,
Into his chest he pressed with love.

With armors of his Ak-Kula
He dressed new horse– fast Taiburul.
"Be damned now you, Konurbai,
No mercy you will see from me!
For lives of dear Chubak, Alma
You will get only death today!

We have a chance for our great win:
Thick fog has made the night so dull".

Raising his sword– fierce Zulpukor,
He led his troops to mortal battle.
Like a tornado, strong hurricane,
The enemy that was asleep
Did not expect such strong attack.

Since then, as by the will of heavens,
Under the sun, by which the earth gets heat,
No nation knew until these days,
Such cruel battle between their people.

The goal for all was only one:
No life spared! Not even the sun!
The number of fallen in that battle,
No one could count at all.
And Konurbai, saving his life,
Fled to his stone-walled Beijing,
The ones who made it for the gates,
Had closed the gates into the castle.

The troops of Khan Manas on horses,
Were not able to take the city,
In vain they beat with axes, swords,
The iron gates of Chinese walls.

Then Khan Manas quickly decided
Surround Beijing for once more,
Deprive it from all food and water,
Without it, the city would die.
By big surprise, as if from heaven
The Lord-creator told himself:
"China is great, unbeatable.
When the world was covered by flood,

It had remained intact, unharmed.
And even forceful Iskender[117]
Could not find ways into this land.
So, go away, Manas! And hurry!"
The voice of reason might have said.
Manas could not ignore that voice:
He gave the order to retreat.
Without their khan– the brave Kokcho,
To native steppes of Sar-Arka,
Turned back the Kazakh troops.

The brave marksmen from Tajik troops
Bidding their farewell in morning,
Had left to native Bukhara.
Their leader– courageous Muzburchak
Was buried in that fatal valley,
He won't return to his beloved.

A team of dashing, young batyrs
Lead by valorous Bokmurun
Burying the fallen soldiers,
Grieving their fallen, generous khan
Left to their native land– Tashkent.
After they buried everyone,
With banner lowered for their honor
Not wiping bitter tears from eyes,
The Kyrgyz troops moved to Talas.
After they passed the Chinese borders,
They halted quick, spotting afar
A single soldier on a horse
Who had followed them all this way.

The rider lay, hugging the horse,
The shiny helmet and armor–

[117] Referring to Alexander the Great

So everyone had recognized–
Sarala, faithful horse of Almanbet.
“My dear Almanbet! You’re alive!
Was I forgiven by mighty God,
If he returned to me alive?”
Hopeful Manas cried out in joy
Despite the wounds and aching back,
He ran towards his dearest friend.
Without releasing grip of bridle,
With hand on head of Sarala,
Who held the lifeless Almanbet?

It seems that his own Chinese land
Did not accept his mortal body–
For fact that he had left that home,
The prodigal son, killed by ambitions,
The troops of a different country led
Against his people– the war he started,
So many lives paid for that fault!

If God forgave him for his sins,
Then fate would not forgive Kyrgyz–
Would take revenge on the descendants.
The lone batyr was buried there,
Handful of dust each soldier tossed,
Bowing their heads so mournfully
The Kyrgyz troops moved to Talas.

Almanbet’s horse– true Sarala,
Remained alone at the hillock,
Onto the grave of his rider
The tears fell from his big brown eyes.

And on stretchers between two horses
Wounded and tired, moaned Manas.
Behind him, laden with the goods

With silk and gold, the silver metals
A camel caravan had followed.
“What is the point of all this crap?
For this I shed all of that blood?
For this thousands of people lost
In ruthless fights and war?
It's not worth lives for all this dust!
If not the victory, but troubles brought
Onto the people of my kin.
Tengir in heaven, please forgive me!”
Delirious Khan had begged the God.
Brother Bakai said to Manas:
“The fallen ones can’t be returned,
No sense in tormenting your heart,
You see, that was so written by fate.
The people will wait for their wins.
Don’t you dare lose your spirit!”

With weakened hand embraced Manas
The wisest of his friends– Bakai,
And promised him not lose courage.
He asked to send forward messengers
So people home could be informed
The end result of their campaign.
He sent a letter to Kanykei
Telling he was wounded in the battle,
And asked to meet with son in arms
Only request for his beloved.
After the letter was received,
Sobbed bitterly sage Kanykei:
“If he is wounded on his back,
It means that nightmare was true.
Chubak! Syrgak! Our Almanbet!
It means, you are not in this world!”
Holding the infant close to heart,
Her Khan to meet went Kanykei.

And Khan Manas saw from afar
His wife with baby in her arms,
He gathered all remaining strength,
Put on his helmet and ak-olpok
On horse he sat and raced too fast
To meet his wife and newborn son.
"Have you come back to me alive
From far Beijing, my dearest Khan?
But where, tell me, without hiding
Are your faithful dear choro?"
Kanykei asked so tearfully:
"I beg of you, beloved wife,
Do not tear up my broken heart,
But rather, give my son to hold!
In spite of all, in cruel battles,
God kept me alive just for him!"
Wounded Manas begged his wife.

But Kanykei was very firm–
Did not give the newborn to Manas!
She knew too well of her husband's traits:
Manas possessed a special eye–
If he gave the kid a glance
Nothing could save the child from death.
With tiny black dot under eye[118],
Manas has bright green-hued eyes.
The beam from flaming eyes of Khan
Should not come close to his own son.
Taking kamchy of Khan Manas,
Pressed to the forehead of the baby,
The father took that blessed whip,
Brought to his heart and kissed it dearly.

[118] Kyrgyz believe that some people possess (unknown to themselves) abilities to cause unhappiness to other people, and usually they have some sort of birthmark around eyes or inside the eye (evil eye belief)

(His own son our Er Manas
Had not seen once before his death)
When troops arrived to Ken Talas,
The people came from everywhere,
To meet the warriors from the march.
Alarmed and worried Aruuke,
In tears, running to Manas:
"Jezde[119], where is my husband, Almanbet?
I do not see him among your rows!"
Hardly Manas got off his horse,
Like his own daughter hugged Aruuke:
"My dear, please do not wait for him!
Fallen our glorious Almanbet.
Chubak is not alive, ayash!
Syrgak was killed in battle too!
I've lost my wings and lost my eyes!"
The mighty Khan sobbed bitterly.
"Beating the Chinese town Beijing
I've come to Ken Talas alone.
For the death of your glorious sons,
For my inglorious campaign,
Forgive me, my beloved people!"

Their tears filled the mountain springs,
The grass withered, the forests wilted,
And everywhere sobbing, weeping,
Of young orphans and aging parents.

Unbearable for Khan Manas
To witness cries of children, widows.
His wounded back was streaming blood,
Piling on torments of his soul.

[119] A respectful way to call a husband of an older sister

TESTAMENT OF MANAS

Embracing Kanykei by her shoulders,
He said to his one true beloved:
“Be brave, my dear and faithful wife,
It seems my hour has arrived.
Care for yourself and for our son!

After you bury me, don’t stay,
Go to Bukhara, to your father–
Let our Semetey grow there!
For here, in his native homeland,
He will not have such sunny days,
My brothers Abyke, Kobesh,
Will not let you live in peace,
And if you do object,
They’ll find reason to execute.

Our son, they'll turn into a mankurt[120],
He’ll be a shepherd for their herds.
And when our Semetey grows up,
Tell him all about my life,
Who was his father, Er Manas,
His real birthplace– Ken Talas.

Bring up a batyr from our son,
So with his loyal fighting squad,
He goes campaigning to this land.
Make one Khanate from all Kyrgyz–
Restore the unity again!
Please bury me inside the mountains,
Make sure no one knows my grave,
So enemies seeking revenge
My body will not desecrate.

[120] Unthinking slave. According to Chyngyz Aitmatov, there was Kyrgyz legend that mankurts were prisoners of war who were turned into slaves by having their heads wrapped in camel skin

The secret place of burial
Tell only khans Bakai, Koshoy.

Send message to Turfan, Kalmaks,
To maiden there, the brave Saikal
I gave a promise long ago
When I leave to another world,
I'd marry her up in the heavens.
Cover me for the final time–
With battle armor– ak-olpok.
And next to me please place my gun–
My one safeguarded ak-kelte[121].

The bag of bullets– boz-kise
Hang over here, on kerege[122].
At my head side place my sword
From folded steel– my Zulpukor[123].
To my right, please don't forget
To put my steely syr-naiza[124].

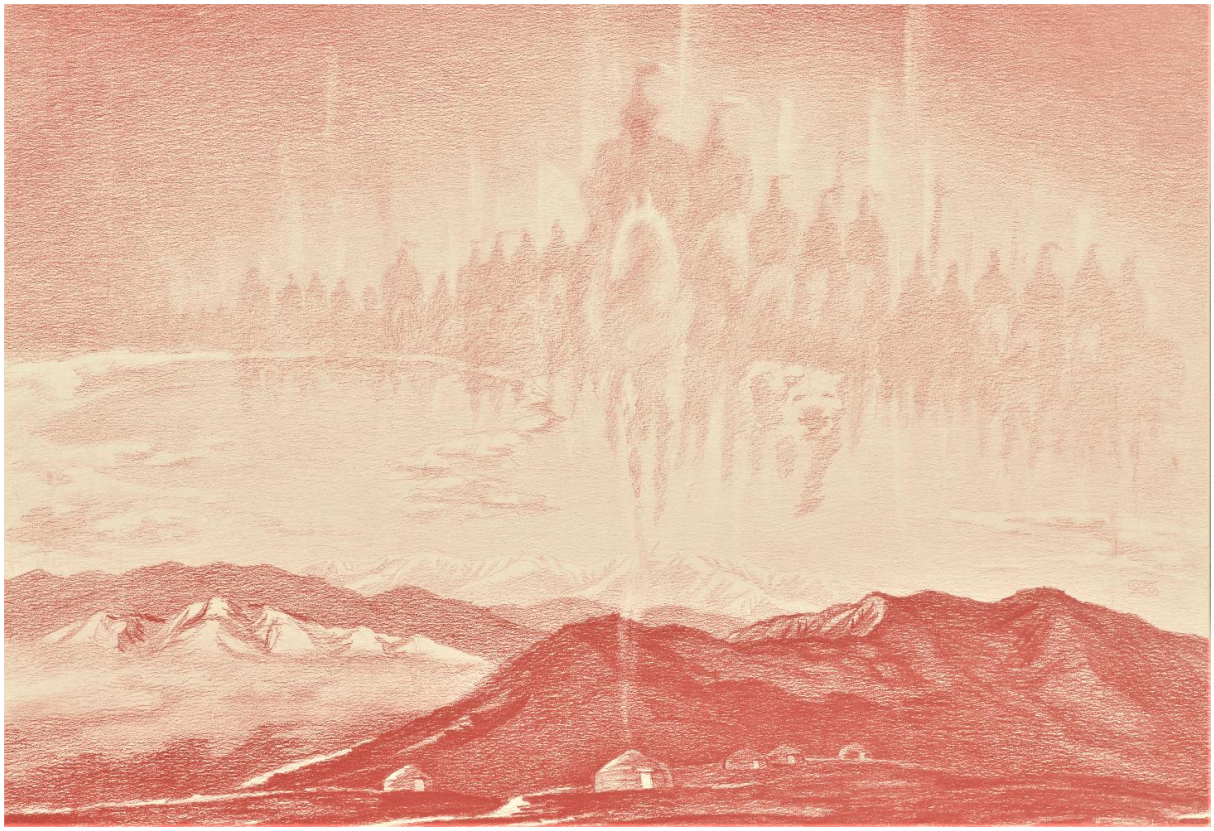
Inside my right hand put kamchy.
One last request please fulfill–
My final moments on this earth
I'll meet not frail old dying men–
But a warrior wounded in battle!

From chicks just hatched with yellow beaks–
The mighty eagles I brought up.
From scattered Kyrgyz tribes exiled
I formed a union, a nation,
Returned my people to native land.

[121] Fire arm
[122] Movable, wooden lattice foundation of the Kyrgyz yurt
[123] Khan Manas' sword
[124] Khan Manas' spear

I have preserved my fatherland
For their descendants, for their future.
In case of cold, hunger, and poverty,
I gathered wealth and treasury,
Created the strongest of khanates.

I'm blessed and happy before the hour,
For my own native Kyrgyz people,
For honor, for this sacred land,
In a heartbeat, I'll give my life.
I do believe for great deeds
Honor will grace our descendants!"



Manas watches over his people

DEATH OF MANAS

In secret, covered by dark night,
Gathered Kanykei faithful jigits,
Along the mountain paths she led
Into the gorge by early morning.

She ordered hammering a passage
Into the rocks of stony walls,
Eternal dwelling for Khan Manas
She built in mountains, a grotto.

Upon returning of Kanykei,
Asked Khan Manas: “Is it all ready?
Now call the relatives in here,
The friends and warriors of mine,
I’ll look at them one final time…”
The people came from all around,
To give the greatest Khan a bow.
When soldiers bid their farewell,
Manas called his wife to him,
Her palms he pressed onto his lips
And gave the soul to the heavens…

The whole people started to weep:
Koshoy and Er-Toshtuk wept
Ajibai, gray-haired Bakai,
His faithful friends– the choro, wept.
The sun, the moon– eclipsed at once,
The night was dark, like in a crypt.

The rock collapsed crumbling to dust,
The forests there died at the roots,
The earth had trembled underneath.

Big camel– mighty Jelmayan
(With the batyr to march he went)
At his yurt, where Manas was laid,
Bowed his knees and tears he shed.

Manas' dog-old Kumayik
Did not eat, drink for seven days,
At night, while looking at the moon,
It howled softly, missing his master.
A hunting falcon Ak-Shumkar,
Tore up the anklets from the legs,
Over the yurt circled in mourn,
Then flew to mountains with no trace.

Batyr's horse– Taiburul,
A true duldul of Khan Manas,
His own bridles he tried to break
And wheezed, beating the ground with hooves,
Devoted eyes of truest friend
Could not stop tears from rolling down.

And quietly, so no one knew,
The maiden Kyz-Saikal died.
The lover's soul had soared up high
Where Manas was already waiting.

Manas' wife here, Kanykei
Could hardly stand on both her feet,
A widow turned at thirty-two,
She sobbed, wearing her mourning clothes,
And tears with blood rolled on her cheeks,
She was not able to stop that stream.

"The sun stopped shining in the heavens,
The darkness fell on sacred ground.
The brightest of the stars died out–

The grief, misfortune fell upon us.
I stand before you all in black–
My Khan, please take me next to you!

You left too early for another world,
Your son you've left as an orphan,
Oh, bitter fate awaits for us:
The famine, poverty, oppression!
Your poor son, young Semetey,
Your power can not take up soon,"
Kanykei sobbed so bitterly.

Six brothers, standing in a row:
Kobesh, and elder Abyke,
Chyibyt, Kochkor and Adybai,
And youngest one– brother Kolbai,
False tears had for all to see,
Their souls were jumping out of joy,
"Farewell, our dear abake!" they yelled,
As if sincerely in mourn.

The darkness of the night descended,
Bakai, Toshtuk, Khan Koshoy,
Washed the body, for final rest,
Read farewell prayers, and so quickly,
Inside that grotto, buried in secret,
With stones they filled the entrance.
(A thousand years would pass,
Nobody knows the grotto's place)
Bakai, the wisest, just at dawn,
In secret, brought a human corpse,
Of an old woman, passed yesterday.

Putting the stones around the body,
And firmly tying with a belt,
They raised the body up above,

To grave they carried it to bury.
After them people rushed and cried,
A handful of soil they've tossed to grave,
As Khan Manas the body buried.

Coming from all sides of the earth,
Came in to yurt of Kanykei,
To comfort her in grieving hour.
Each one wished her to gather strength,
Promised her, they'll come in a year,
And gather here under Khan's banner,
With honor to remember him–
And parted each their own way.

Hardly the forty days had passed,
And now to widow of Khan Manas–
His people sent that Abyke,
Asking to celebrate nike[125].
After receiving quick refusal,
He hid the evil in his soul.

And then Kobesh sent own people,
Offering marriage to sister-in-law,
But he was not that lucky either.
Each brother wanted to wind up
With faithful wife of late Manas,
The power of the Khan, the treasury.

Wise Kanykei was very sure,
The clouds were gathering above,
Taking her son with Chiyirdy
She fled to Bukhara, to father.
The brothers– Abyke and Kobesh,
Were not able to reach consensus,

[125] A ceremony of a wedding, blessed by a clergyman

Each one wanted the power of Khan,
The war went on between the brothers.
And soon, the once powerful khanate,
Was ruined again by foes,
Manas's throne fell into crumbles.
For thousand years and even more,
The Kyrgyz lived under the heel–
Under one, then under another.
For power they'll kill out of envy,
Will ruin all, sell out the sacred,
Cheaters reap the benefits.
And therefore, be always mindful!
Inside the arms of Talas mountains,
Our great Manas lies eternally,
But for the batyr, to this very day,
No one arranged his funeral.

Peace

Semetey

KANYKEI FLEES TALAS TO BUKHARA

Exactly forty days had went
Since the valiant Er-Manas
The world of living people left.
The mourners wailed with every dawn,
The loss quick spread the aching land.

Jaisan— the singing storyteller
(A gift from God that he beheld)
Each morning traveled through the mountains,
In bitter tears the batyr sang grief—
The name of hero Er-Manas,
His greatest deeds beyond belief
In prayers Jaisan would glorify,
So every Kyrgyz living soul
Would not forget their loving Khan.

And thus the hero's wake was honored.
Manas's father Bai Jakyp,
Seeing off visitors that day,
Called the closest tribesmen for counsel.
"My Er-Manas just passed away—
We're weak again, without protector,
The khans, choro in battle fallen.

Remained alive old Tazbaimat,
By miracle escaped his death
The head of on-bashi Kyrgyl,
Old men— Bakai and Khan Koshoy
Came safe from fateful death that day.
The once united khaganate
Will by the tribe dismantle and fade,
The wicked Chinese will attack again,
Our pastures, cattle they'll take away.
Each Kyrgyz clan in disarray.

For our people be as one,
One Khan should rule as one khanate.

We must have counsel on that issue—
Who will we trust the throne of Khan?
Two brothers had my Er-Manas,
Two sons were born by Bakdolot.
Let elder son, my Abyke, take
The rightful throne left by his brother,
And marry Kanykei-jene.
That's what our tribal laws dictate!"
Old bai Jakyp told this wise counsel,

"But Kanykei became my sister—
She's close to me as my real mother.
Such high esteem I have for her,
Onto my elder brother's bed
As God my witness I cannot lay!
Kobesh is free to marry jene
And rule over the whole Khanate.
I give to him my rightful turn,"
Told Abyke to counsel gathered.

To Kanykei's court were sent at once
Old man Kyrgyl and Tazbaimat.
They brought to her this news, by that
Brother Kobesh came to the throne
And soon would be a marriage toi.

The fallen ruler's widow would turn
Into Kobesh's younger wife.
At his last hour, Khan Manas
Bequeathed to his most loyal bride:
"After you finish my burial course
Run to your father, to Bukhara,
Where Semetey, our son, be safe.

And here, upon the native soil,
He will not see happy days.
My brothers, Abyke, Kobesh.
Will not let you a peaceful life.
If you don't like that and object
They'll make reason to execute.
As soon our Semetey grows up,
Tell him about the life I led,
Who was his father, Er-Manas
And of his homeland— our Talas".

Her full attention and respect
Showed guests the wisest Kanykei.
"Kobesh, my brother by ties of marriage,
My husband's brother by the blood,
I think he's worthy to rule Khanate.
And as Shari'ah tells us rules
For son to not be orphan made,
To keep the bloodline all intact,
His brother's progeny to save,
I need to marry him by now.
I am commanded by this fate
To retain the eternal widow.
When Er- Manas was still alive,
I vowed to him and on our son
The pact: I won't let anyone
Touch my body when he's gone.
To oath I gave my one beloved,
I will be faithful till my death,"
In tears, answered Kanykei.
Treating with honor her guests in full,
She ordered to saddle a steed—
Manas' horse, Taiburul.
Taking her son and mother-in-law,
At night covered with darkness rode
To Bukhara and her father she fled.

KANYKEI BIDS FAREWELL TO TALAS

Manas' wife Kanykei
Was the most charming soul of all;
The most faithful wife known to man
Gentle and slender like a swan.
And thus, the Bukharian Emir's daughter
Was ready to help the troubled soul
And bring peace to all discord.
She grew a garden in Talas,
Next to a palace built by Manas,
Back when he was the Khan of Khans
Within the state of mountains, steppes,
Uniting all Kyrgyz batyrs.

Stood next to him, sage Kanykei.
And now the widow held deep mourn,
Holding her newborn son in hand
Both forced to leave this blessed land—
That was the cruel turn of fate.

Preparing for the lengthy journey
Under the stars, a quiet night,
Taking her son and mother-in-law,
Her bitter tears she then let go:
"Farewell Talas, my beloved land,
My native soil was different yet,
But here I first learned what is love,
And life, and happiness, and strength.
I was a wife to Er-Manas,
A judge, and my husband's true friend,
Both proud shaykha and now a slave.
Today I leave with heavy heart,
The valleys of rivers Ken-Kol, Talas,
Where my beloved Manas sleeps,

Here I'm a widow, my son an orphan—
Such are the wishes of our fate!
My heart is full with melancholy,
Suffering, and emptiness—
I swear to you, by my final tears,
Whether dead or alive,
I will come back to you, my land!
As soon as Semetey grows up
And learns the truth about his fate,
About his father Er-Manas,
He'll know his native land is Talas.
When the final hour comes for me,
Even if I am on different soil,
All of my kin I will entrust
To bring my ashes here to hold
And bury me near my Manas.
I fell in love with all my soul
With these Kyrgyz people's pure hearts!

Farewell, the mountains and the forests,
The valleys, rivers and jailoo!
Farewell, my white-peaked Ala-Too!
Farewell, the earth! Farewell, Kyrgyz!
I will be praying in the morn
That the Creator keeps you safe
From wars of blood and tribulations;
From sudden illness and poverty;
From envy, cunning, evil souls;
That there are no more orphans and widows,
No struggle for power between the clans!"

She took off her mourning kerchief,
Took a handful of soil to keep,
And tied it into a strong sheaf.
Casting a final look around,
She left Talas with heavy heart.

When Kobosh was told the news
That Kanykei refused to marry
And fled, eluding the nike,
Like a fierce wolf, he fumed with fury:
“You see how this Tajik is cunning—
The throne she wants just for herself!

The last Khan’s guard ordered to kill
The rebellious widow, or put in chains
And throw her in the deepest zindan!
That child of hers we'll take away!
To feed and swaddle him, I order,
And quickly find him another mother!
Keep Kanykei inside the dungeon
Until consent she gives to me
And a submissive wife she'll be!”
Kobosh shouted in anger.

As soon as dawn came on the land,
He came to the palace with his army,
But he was very surprised:
The gate was wide open, not a soul.
No widow, old woman, or babe.
They searched everywhere, but in vain—
As if they had all disappeared!
The treasurer went out to find them,
The poor soul, with a bow, he gave
The keys to the golden chests of Manas.
He pressed the keys to his greedy heart
And laughed so loud in disbelief.

Kanykei

ON THE WAY TO BUKHARA

When they came to Amu Darya,
The river ford had to be crossed.
A horse with clothes and all their food
The blasting water took away.
The poor grandmother Chiyirdy
Ran along the river ways,
While clinging horse, loaded with goods
That were not washed downstream the same.
In ragged clothes and without food,
With little baby in their hands,
In empty, boundless steppes alone—
A dreary state, the two women's hands
Clinging so tight to Taiburul,
The only horse that still was left.
They slept at night to warm the baby.

In early morning they woke up
And kept their way to Bukhara.
Their Taiburul— once flying steed
Duldul, long tested in battles—
Broke his hoof on stony road,
And he could hardly stand or walk;
Behind the women he dragged his feet.
Without shelter, food, and water,
And exhausted from the heat,
They trudged along the empty steppes.

Having lost her strength, Kanykei
Fell down, numb, onto the grass,
And clinging to her empty breast,
The hungry Semetey showed fuss.
Lifting her hands, asking the heavens,
Old Chyirdy begged to God,

To save from death her son's widow
And spare the old woman from a wicked fate
Of burying a young nursing mother
Along with her grandson on empty breasts.
Her plea for help at the fateful hour
Reached the expanse of bluest skies.
The Holy Kaiberen was sent to them—
As a gray goat with billy kid—
By the Creator's will himself.
Such Providence that this gray goat
Heard cries from a hungry newborn child;
Ever so-faintly, coming to her senses,
Opened her eyes frail Kanykei.

In front of her she saw there standing
This gray goat with its billy kid,
Her udder full with precious milk,
Engorged the famished Semetey,
And wagging with his funny tail,
The billy kid sucked next to him.
Into her palm milked Chiyirdy,
To hungry Kanykei she gave.
That's how the Holy Kaiberen
Saved hungry people from their fate.
And Taiburul, their horse of faith,
Was standing strong on his own two feet;
Along with the savior, the Holy Goat,
They kept going on their journey
Til finally, they reached their goal—
The fertile land of Ferghana.

The parting hour to them came,
As if with a sister, cheek to cheek,
To the Holy Goat clung Kanykei.
And from both of their almond-shaped eyes

The farewell tears of two mothers rolled,
While the billy kid stuck out his tongue
To lick the baby's head goodbye
And Semetey hugged his brother's neck.
As if her own daughter, old Chyirdy
Embraced the goat Holy Kaiberen
And happy tears flowed down her cheeks
As two unruly salty streams.
Then grandma took the billy kid,
Gave to him a kiss just once,
The kid watched grandma Chyirdy
And like her most beloved grandson,
Wagged his tail so playfully.
For a long time they stood on that tall hill—
The goddess of mountains, valleys, steppes;
The gray goat next to her kin,
Watched them walk until they left
And the traveling women could not be seen.

Kaiberen

ARRIVAL OF KANYKEI IN BUKHARA

With a little baby in her arms,
Clothed in rags, in jagged shoes,
Somehow the two women had reached
The walls of the capital Bukhara.
Kanykei asked the guards at the gates
To let them pass into the palace;
No one there believed her statements
That the emir was her father.
They waited long enough to see
Into the city gates came Ismail;
He did not recognize his sister.
The guards received his harshest order—
To not let the vagrants into the city.

Pleaded in tears our Kanykei:
“Oh, Ismail, my dear brother,
Your sister is in front of you.
At age sixteen I was a beauty
When I left my father’s house—
Now I came back, only a widow
With little baby in my arms.
Your brave jezde was killed, alas!
He’s buried in his land, Talas.
Before his death bequeathed my Khan
To Bukhara we need to flee.
So that his son, your own nephew,
Would not grow up a woeful orphan,
You would raise him as your son.
I’d rather let Semetey think
I’m not his mother, but his sister—
You are the father he will love.”

Sobbing, Ismail gave embrace
To his dear sister, now recognized.
He took the baby from her arms
And wrapped him into khan's chapan.
With care, warmth, and sincere affection,
The infant fell asleep with a smile.
That's how Semetey— son of Manas,
Kanykei— Manas's widow,
And Manas's mother— old Chyirdy,
Found shelter, care in the palace
Of the Bukharian Emir-Atemir.

TRIAL RACE FOR TAITORU

So, Ismail replaced Manas
As father for orphaned Semetey.
To ride and race on a battle horse,
To master a spear, sword, and shield,
He taught his nephew by himself.
Three languages Semetey spoke,
So fluent he was in each of them:
Farsi, Arabic, and native tongue.
In Kyrgyz language he conversed
With his grandmother, Chyirdy.
He called his mother, Kanykei,
An elder sister, his eje.
The fact that she was his real mother,
The boy did not suspect at all.
So Semetey became a young man;
He grew stronger with each day.
To honor this important milestone,
The Bukharian Emir Atemir arranged
A great feast with races and a big baige.

Shaking the heavens and the valleys,
The mountain tops with all the forests,
Just like the trumpets of Jericho,
Roared all over the eastern lands
The copper-metal-forged kernei.
The guests were called from every part,
Convened by generous Atemir.
At the feast Kanykei decided
To give her fate another test—
Let Taitoru compete in the horse race
And if her dashing horse remained
The fastest there, the number one;
Her Semetey would get the prize—

The big baiga that winners claim.
Into maidan she wanted to go,
And publicly announce the fact
The fastest racing horse was born
From Khan Manas' Akkula.
To mortal battles more than once
On Akkula went Er Manas
Our fatherland, wide Turkestan,
From Chinese tyranny he saved.

And now her son was on the horse,
But if the heavens wished today
That Taitoru would go astray,
Then Manas' son Semetey
Would never learn the real truth—
She was his mother, not a sister,
His father was batyr Manas,
His homeland was in Ken Talas.
She gave an oath to Earth and sky
That she would drink the snake's poison.
Off she went to her father's palace
Requesting he let Taitoru
Into the races alaman,
The rider on that saddle be
None other than Emir's grandson,
Young Semetey, Manas' son.

The promised day was finally here
Where in the vast Ferghana valley
The fastest steeds gathered in a square.
In perfect circle they trotted along,
And sayapkers discordantly
By croup, by wither, and by gaskin
Appraised each horse before the race.
Each one so splendid, hand-selected,
Eyes caressing with their beauty;

Jumpy, biting at the bits,
So eager each to start the race;
Ready to run to the ends of Earth,
To the west, to east, or south.
When Semetey came on horseback,
On Taitoru, circling the square,
A sneering laughter all could hear.
So rueful was young Semetey,
After he heard their sarcastic jokes;
About how plain his race horse was
He almost got off Taitoru.

But Kanykei ran up to him,
And whispered softly to her son:
“Your horse Taitoru lacks the looks,
Only to make Bukhara laugh.
He’s not so stately, with his short legs
His step lacks width that others have.
What they fail to see is this:
Your horse can sprint for five full days;
While other steeds are out of breath,
He keeps on going without rest.
Give him freedom in the race,
A steady pace, don’t use kamchy.
At first, it might seem he's outraced,
But midway, when the horses fall—
So out of breath, these eyeful steeds—
Your horse will come ahead of all
And reach the finish first in line.
Your horse is of a rare breed—
In Kyrgyz mountains he was born.”

From here, tulpars of every kind
Went to the start, in eight days time
They would dash to Bukhara.
Those riders who were first in line

Would get most generous gifts as prize—
Gold and silver, precious stones,
And other goods that please the eyes.
Back from Zhizak to Bukhara the steeds
Rushed in with the break of dawn,
With measured steps and time to spare,
Plain Taitoru followed them, last.
Admiring the beauty all around,
Gazing at horses rushing by,
With a jealous scoff rode Semetey.
The horses had gone far away,
Disappeared all from his sight.

Our Semetey on Taitoru lagged
Behind no less than two whole miles.
Here came the jokes— tamasha,
The quips that brought out bitter smiles.
The audience laughed all around,
Why on this earless, slowest ass
Emir's grandson had joined the race.
The rider flogged with kamchy his horse;
Ignored that anger, Taitoru,
Who kept his speed at usual pace.
Remembered now young Semetey
The talk he had with his old aunt.

It seemed this childless widow planned
On shaming him in public view.
Oh, anger, envy she must have felt,
Decided then young Semetey.
He'd slaughter Taitoru for meat
And treat the beggars and the poor,
Quickly return to Bukhara,
And kill his envious aunt at once.
Leaning so firmly into the stirrups,
He began to pull the bits too tight,

But Taitoru, he did not budge,
Did not obey his rider's will.
In that moment saw our Semetey
The steeds that went so far ahead!
Two horses Taitoru caught up to,
Both behind now, short of breath!
The fourth! The fifth! And the seventh!
And here he passed by that whole crowd,
The horses, tired of the lengthy race
Were all behind plain Taitoru!
In front of him now only one—
Emir's own steed-, Ak-Tulpar.
But now the moment had arrived
When Taitoru caught up with him,
And these two horses were snout to snout,
Galloping together to Bukhara.

Emir's horse Ak-Tulpar
Almost at the finish line, fell
(It seemed he had been over-worked)
And wasn't able to get up.
The first to arrive to Bukhara
Was Kyrgyz Tulpar Taitoru!
The people shouted and rejoiced,
The return of horses they commended.
In all her glory, Kanykei
Came out to greet the winners then,
The whole crowd muted instantly.
A chapan embroidered with golden thread
And Kyrgyz marten tebetei
Bestowed to her son, Kanykei.
Right at that moment on maidan
Many exuberant shouts were heard;
The tears of joy appeared as streams
Like outpours from such forlorn eyes.

Holding the hand of Semetey
She did ascend to a minaret,
“Dear family, our friends and guests,
In front of you is Sanirabiga!
With all my heart I am so grateful
To all who came to our dear fest.
In honor of his first grandson
The feast is thrown by my own father.
The first who arrived to Bukhara
And scored the alaman baige—
The Kyrgyz Tulpar, Taitoru!
According to his pedigree,
From Ak-Kula this horse was born;
On which the Kyrgyz Khan Manas
Protected the native land not once,
Into the mortal battles he went.

Fifty years ago, in Bukhara
The throne was held by the Chinese.
The Chinese Khan Alooke
Killed many Turkic son in battle,
Enslaved them, drove them out of their land.
But Kyrgyz khan, our Er Manas
Was the one to defeat the Chinese troops—
Our fatherland, our Turkestan,
He freed from all the enemies.
So blessed by the destiny,
I had to become Manas’s wife.
I was given the name of Kanykei,
Which means the Khan’s lawful nike.
Here’s Semetey— my dearest son.
His father is batyr Manas,
His homeland is the wide Talas!
For the death of his hero father,
He’ll take revenge on enemies;

The struggle for power between the clans,
He'll do away by his father's will.
These are the words of great Manas!"

The Bukharian Emir, Atemir,
To the heavens raised his hands in request
(The whole maidan then followed him);
From mighty God was his behest,
To keep his grandson from all troubles,
And fulfill his filial duty!
All of maidan agreed with him,
He blessed Semetey by saying "Amen!"
After exactly thirty days
With a stealthy strong squad behind him,
To native land, to far Talas,
His journey started— brave Semetey.

Horse Races

ARRIVAL OF SEMETEY TO TALAS

Near valley rivers Talas, Ken Kol,
Arrived Semetey with his squad.
From folks he met along the way
He learned the mausoleum's location.
Manas' burial place he found;
There was an old man who greeted them,
In beggars clothes and with a cane:
"Oh Semetey, my dear boy!
Bakai-ata is in front of you.
I recognized you right at once—
You look exactly like Manas!
I live in here, always on watch
Of your father's mausoleum— kumboz.
Manas's younger brother, Kobesh,
Banished me from Ken Talas
And took away all of my herds,"
Wept bitterly, old Khan Bakai.

Young Semetey was deeply touched,
Embraced the old man by the shoulders.
"Ata, I know all about you.
Both mother and grandma Chyirdy,
Since I was a little child,
Told me legendary stories,
How with your wit and your sharp tongue,
On any matter— peace or war—
You surely could convince anyone.
Massive hoards you could pacify,
And ruthless enemies reconciled;
You always knew in far advance
What tomorrow would bring for us.
As a falcon eye in the darkest night
You led batyrs to glorious fights.

I know, ata, both war and peace,
To Er Manas you were the shield.
I swear to you by my own honor,
I won't let anyone harm you!
Here's your chapan and tebetei,
Sewn by your daughter-in-law Kanykei!
Here's your horse, my abake,
I heard grandfather Bai Jakyp
Is waiting longingly for us
And your return to Ken Talas—
Let's pray for father and be off!"

Then old Bakai stated the truth:
"Your father is not buried here.
In the highest mountains, past untrodden rocks,
From vicious enemies he's hidden.
Clandestine from the public watch,
Entombed in secret by Kanykei.

Two true batyrs that were with her
Swore by the heavens to khanum
To keep that secret in their hearts;
Came down in darkness of the night
And deadly poison they consumed.
The loyal guards are lying there,
Warding kumboz for eternity.
Of those who knew where Manas sleeps,
The only living soul is Kanykei..."
They read the prayer one more time,
From mournful eyes they brushed off tears,
And to Ken Talas pursued their quest.

"Oh, suyunchu, old man! Rejoice!
A white mare needs to be sacrificed!
Your grandson Semetey returned!"
Into the yurt ran Bakdolot,

She was afraid that Bai Jakyp
Would die from joy of news just heard.

But the old man, hiding his eyes
And gently stroking his thinning beard,
Dejectedly he said to his wife:
“Would you consider for a fact
My grandson missed me in Bukhara?
His visit is just courtesy—
With his brothers he seeks to make connection.”

Into Talas came Semetey
To take revenge on Kobesh,
Who took his father’s throne as khan;
His mother, Kobesh planned to kill,
With newborn son she had to flee.
He couldn’t forgive his brother that!
Upheaval would be among the men,
Demanding their khan, Semetey.
The fight for power would start again
In vain, bloodshed and mutiny.

Jakyp said: “Zeket to the Chinese we gave,
And in return the peace we got.
Our herds graze the highland pastures,
With sickle and hoe, a harvest we reap
Along with grain, meat, and milk.
If the grandson comes to power,
He’ll start preparing for a war
To get revenge on Konurbai.
The goods we’ve earned through our own labor,
The cattle that took years to grow—
Just like his father, he’ll waste away,
The war with China he’ll start again
And turn into his fierce new foe
The unconquerable Konurbai.

To keep the peace with the Chinese
The devious Konur, we must forgive.
Your son Kobesh has power now,
He is the one to rule his people!
If Semetey is left alive,
The throne he'll take up from your son!
To Semetey you'll give kymyz—
A mortal poison you'll put in it!"
The cruel bastard told his wife.

"Old man, did you turn mad?
The mighty God will not forgive
Such heavy sins if we commit,"
Said terror-stricken Bakdolot.

Jakyp grabbed his wife by her long braids
And put a dagger to her throat:
"You'll do exactly as I say,
Or else I will kill you myself!"
Once he put on his shoes and hat
The evil man came from his yurt,
To greet his grandson and plan his work.

When Semetey and Bakai drove up,
Got off their horses near the yurts,
Spreading his arms, Bai Jakyp
Shouted so loud for all to hear:
"Oh, my grandson, my Semetey!
I longed to meet you and could not sleep!
In pain I was, without you here!
Your childish head in dreams I held,
Caressed and kept close to my heart.
Our sage Bakai! Beloved friend!
I am so happy to see you here!
Bury the hatchet is what we will.
My grandson Semetey arrived,

We’ll be together from now on— still,
Before you enter in the yurt,
We’ll follow an ancient ritual.
Hey Bakdolot, ayak, with white milk
Bring in here for us to fill!”

So Bakdolot came out the yurt,
With a bow greeted the welcomed guests,
And two full bowls of kymyz she gave.
Took Semetey his drink from her
Ready to gulp it all at once.
Subtly shook her head, Bakdolot,
Her movement was noticed by Khan Bakai.

“Your grandson, my dear abake,
Was raised in Bukhara since birth.
You see, the people do not know there
Of our customs in greeting guests—
Before serving the drinks to them
The master is the first to drink!
The first sip he'll take, then your grandson
Will finish the bowl of that kymyz!”

“No,no! Jakyp does not love kymyz!
The old man’s stomach is not that good.”
Bakdolot quickly snatched the bowl
And splashed kymyz onto the ground.
The yard dog licked the liquid up,
And in less than a minute it was dead.

Young Semetey grabbed his sword in anger
But Khan Bakai stood right between them
To stop the murder from taking place.
“He’s your grandfather, my dear son.
Let God himself act as his judge.
Your people wait for you, let’s go.

They want to hear your plans and thoughts,”
Said the sage khan old Bakai, and thus,
Semetey returned his sword to scabbard.

“I’ve sinned, my dear Semetey!
Forgive me, or kill me right away!
But first, please hear to what I've to say!
The Kyrgyz people live today
And think of these things just as I.
I am unpledged to any khan;
Who is my ruler, it’s all the same—
The Chinese khan or my own grandson.

I ask for health, some peace, and food,
A home with a faithful wife in it,
Just warmth and comfort, children’s laughter,
And a horse for races— that is all
The people need to live with joy!
Your father, valorous Manas,
Saved all our people from destruction,
Created the Kyrgyz Khaganate,
United us as one, a people,
But lacked the wisdom of a ruler—
Advice of elders, he did not heed.
His squad, choro, and all his men,
The retinue who was always nearby,
Abused his trust, oppressed their people,
Around Manas they were just toadies.

Each one deceiving, full of slander,
Took revenge on people they disliked.
Manas was drunken with that power,
And never listened to my advice.
The fate of our khaganate he did
Entrust to Almanbet— that traitor
And good-for-nothing scoundrel

Who did decide which way to go.
At the funeral Karkyra,
The races were, with Ak-Kula,
Alma had played a trick on the Chinese,
The enemy arranged a slaughter.
Against his friend, batyr Manas,
He turned the khans and relatives.
In his preempt against takeover,
With threats of death, he led to war
The Kyrgyz khans against Chinese,
The bloody war that ended all.
Inane advice he gave Manas
This guileful Chinese Almanbet.
So many lives ruined by him!
Where's my Chubak? Where's my Syrgak?
And where's my valiant Kazakh?
Aidarkhan's son, Khan Kokcho?
Where is Serek, and Muzburchak?
So, spoiled by the richest father—
Where was his son, young Bokmurun?
They all were killed! Gone in a moment
As if a strong wind blew them away!
At night, in dreams, I see them all,
Young boys, the rascals, full of life.
Alas! They're not alive on earth!
And in the morning, I just cry,"
The old man sobbed, losing his breath.

"Taking revenge on Khan Kobesh,
You can return your father's throne.
But my dear grandson, you must know:
If your own blood you shed for power,
Ancestor spirits will punish us,
Almighty God will not forgive!"
In tears said the old man, Jakyp.

His grandson Semetey, replied:
“To roam the earth, I am prepared
As a homeless person turned to beggar.
My only wish, always in my heart,
Is eternal freedom for my native land!
The sacred order by my father:
‘For yesterday, today, tomorrow,
For all eternity henceforth—
Either with liberty, or death!’
Manas’ sacred pledge I've sworn,
I will fulfill, just save your breath!”

And here the sage Bakai conveyed:
“Upon the death of kokjal Manas,
The throne by force took son, Kobesh,
Exiled the widow, Kanykei,
With newborn son to Bukhara.
His own people, he started to rob,
Insolvent widows and orphans.

Men still devoted to Khan Manas,
From Ken Talas he banished them,
And left the ones who always flatter:
The one— rapscallion Tazbaimat,
The other— meddler chal Kyrgyl.
When Kobesh took off the throne,
No one in the crowd supported him!
To build up power, tighten his grip,
To the Chinese he turned for help,
Betrayed the Khan Manas’s word!
So here again, the Kyrgyz tribes
Lost freedom living under heel!
Without sparing our resources,
We need to call for Kurultai.

Each Kyrgyz tribe should gather here,
And choose ajo by honest vote!”
Was the conclusion of sage Bakai.

Along the river in the valley,
They set up some fifty yurts.
Their chosen envoys each tribe sent
From nationwide, big Kurultai.
Electing a new khan was its goal,
To distribute the power equitably
And create a united khaganate.

Kobesh came out to the square,
Delivering a speech to the people:
“Brothers and friends! Both old and young!
I am so grateful to you all!
You’ve been so patient all these years,
Gave heed to me as your own khan.
When Er Manas had passed away,
To avoid attacks from enemies
I took the power into my hands
So, our own Kyrgyz clans would not
Be scattered all over the world.
Batyrs are gone! We lost Manas!

To keep the safety of our people,
We bend our knees before the Chinese,
I asked for help to guard off raids.
Even by paying triple zeket,
We live here on our own land,
So many years we've kept this peace.
I’m not a warrior, nor batyr,
I am jylkychy— the nomadic shepherd.
Neither a sword, nor a bow with arrows
Ever in my hands did I hold.

The shepherd's ukuruk is my weapon.
The khan's throne, to whom we entrust,
Today our Kurultai will resolve.
The word of Kurultai will rule!"
Finished his speech, Khan Kobesh.

Subdued, the people spoke not a word;
Later, voices emerged from the crowd:
"Why is there a need to choose the khan,
When on the throne we have the one."
"To the Chinese we pay zeket
And in return they hold off raids."
"No foe had stepped into Talas!"
The doubts, concerns, voiced worried folk.

Turned to the people Semetey:
"I did come back to my own land,
My sacred duty to fulfill,
Before my people! Before my fate!
Here's abake, my Khan Kobesh,
Who told us the whole bitter truth.
Our bravest warriors had fallen
In mortal battle in Beijing.
The people were without defenders,
The land remained thus without watch,
And our clans just like before
Would turn into a prey for wolves.

I praise you, my dear abake,
At a pressing hour you took the power,
Saved all from ruin— our people and land!
For many years to keep this peace
You paid zeket in tripled form.
Over these years young men matured,
Today we're strong, we are the shield,
And for our land Talas we stand

As sons fulfilling sacred duty!
The blessed words of Khan Manas:
‘For yesterday, today, tomorrow,
For all eternity henceforth—
Either in liberty, or death!’”
Semetey told the Kyrgyz people.

Jolting the heavens, mountains, valleys,
Even the darkest, thickest woods,
The loud “Hurray” came from maidan.

Sage Bakai then took the stage:
“My brothers, friends, Kurultai!
There are two choices here before us;
The tripled zeket now we pay,
Under the heel of the Chinese, we stay
While Khan Kobosh can keep the throne—
There is another way for us.
Bequeathed by him, Aikol Manas,
To unite all of our Khanates,
Into one fist we gather our will!
In case the enemy comes charging,
We have the power to hold this stand,
Defend our freedom, honor, and land!

The second choice goes with the change
That Khan Kobesh gives up the throne,
Young Semetey will turn to khan
And rule the United Khaganate!
Who’ll be the ruler, Kurultai will choose.”
Thus, finished his speech, old sage Bakai.

Each tribe had sent into Talas,
Their trusted envoys for their vote.
Eight hundred representatives were there,
And just as many were tompoi

All dyed in green— to each envoy assigned.
In the biggest, empty nomad yurt
Were two empty buckets with the words
‘Khan Kobosh’ on bucket one,
The other listed ‘Semetey’.
Conceding to the tribal laws,
Kalys— impartial to them both—
Counted the bones in front of all.
The votes collected for Semetey—
Exactly eight hundred in total;
For khan Kobosh— not even a one,
His bucket was completely bare.

And then, like thunder from the heavens,
The roar of the native land was loud:
“Freedom! Honor! Equality!”
And Semetey put on terdik,
Was raised above the heads of men.
The Kyrgyz khan of mountains, steppes,
Became the son of Khan Manas!

Blessings to return home

BETRAYAL OF THE SQUAD KYRK CHORO

As soon as the khan's toi came to an end—
The tournaments, races, and kurosh—
From ken Talas dispersed the guests,
Taking their prizes and gifts with them.

The head of the squad Kyrk Choro,
Old man Kyrgyl, was called in to talk;
In a hidden manner he crushed Kobosh.
"Manas' young son Semetey
Deceived our people with his words,
Nobody knows what's in our future.
To take revenge for his father's death,
With China he will start a war.
Again, the suffering and death—
The Kyrgyz people will shed blood.
To save ourselves from that grim fate
We will convene and take the palace,
Demand that young prick Semetey
Leave the khan's throne at once.
And if he will not go with that,
He'll finally meet his deadly end!"

Kyrgyl-chal called in the squad,
Conveyed the words of vile Kobosh.
"And only if the young man Semetey
Again, will lead us into war,
In front of all we'll be, as always,
Kyrk Choro, the first to die!
And if that beaten vile Kobosh
Does realize his evil plot,
He will divide us all by clans—
A struggle for power will begin,
For us, it will mean death again.

We are too old, and weary now,
From barymta, from war we're tired;
Let's go away to far Alai,
Past Ooganistan and Chinese lands.
There we will have a peaceful life—
So promised us khan Konurbai.
We will return to our homeland
And peace and quiet will be here!"
Such was the decision of Kyrk Choro.

Taking their spears and their swords,
Covered by darkness of the night,
The Kyrk Choro left Ken Talas.
Learning about this, Semetey,
In a narrow gorge between the rocks,
Caught the deserters in the morn
And ordered them to turn around.
"Our people fed you, all needs were met,
You've gained your cattle and your goods;
Your only duty— to protect this land
From robberies and invading men!
And if the warriors choro
Decide they will betray their people,
You have to know this: none of you
Will leave this spot alive today!"
Said Semetey in angered wrath.

All of a sudden, a shout was heard:
"Kill him!" was the loud order.
In his own squad Kobosh appeared
And blocked the gorge from down below.
He was so sure that Kyrk Choro
Would execute his evil order
And kill Semetey, his own nephew.
He was so brutally mistaken!

The old Kyrgyl and Kyrk Choro,
To avoid this sinful, wicked order,
Sped up in the gorge against Kobosh.
Jigits, the squad led by Kobosh,
Pulled him right from off his horse
So Semetey with his own hands
Could finish off his cruel uncle.

But he could not shed a relative's blood—
Thus, ordered young Khan Semetey
To tie his uncle to a tree
And leave him all alone, no guards,
For wolves and jackals to make their snack.

With his own squad, Khan Semetey
To Kyrk Choro caught up in the valley
On the highland river bank, Kochkor.
“Batyrs! My dears, I beg of you!
Return to your native land Talas!
A united state I did create,
And now our own Kyrgyz folk
Will lead a free life on native land!”
Pleaded with them young Semetey.
But Kyrk Choro was without answer,
Swinging swords charged forth to fight—
So fierce a battle had just begun!
Without a hint of holding back
The Kyrgyz sons turned on each other.

Young Semetey was fierce in fight
With armor worn by Manas— ak-olpok
That no one could break through with spears;
With father’s sword, the Ach-Albars
That slayed batyrs right on the spot.
(The swordsmanship was taught to him
by his Bukharian uncle Ismail)

With his small team of true batyrs
They punished traitors in that fight.
After the clash, the khan's guard brought
Two young men in heavy shackles.
Since time of birth, they were in prison—
In deep zindan, put them Kobosh.
When Semetey learned all about them,
He could not hide his bitter tears
When his mother told him of these men.

Almanbet's son Gulchoro
And Chubak's son Hanchoro
Stood right before him, both alive.
And all Choro, fallen in battle
Were buried in that fateful valley.
For more than a thousand years since then
They lay in the steppes in unending sleep.
Kumboz, all built in rows for them
You will see in Kochkor today…

Counsel

SEMETEY RETURNS TO BUKHARA

In the Bukharian khanate, Kanykei,
With old grandmother, Chiyirdy,
Spent many anxious nights with worry,
Unable to sleep and eat every day,
From far Talas awaiting news.
“Could it be true, on our own homeland
Killed by the enemies our Semetey?”
But on the brightest days of all,
Three friends appeared in front of her.

With a smile asked Semetey, his mother:
“Ene, could you guess— who are these men?
Perhaps some of my relatives?
Long time observed them, Kanykei,
The two young batyrs in front of her,
But noticed no familial features.
“Mighty Creator! This is Chubak!”
Suddenly shouted Chyirdy. -
“And this one— my son Almanbet!
Is it so real, from a fatal war
They did return at last, alive?”
Semetey introduced his companions,
“Ene! You did not recognize!
This is Chubak’s son Hanchoro!
And Gulchoro, Almanbet’s son!
One is my brother, the other a friend!”

“My dear sons!” cried Kanykei,
Hugging the heroes to her chest.
“When Khan Manas had left this world
Along with him Alma, Chubak,
And Chubak’s widow, Ashirin,
And my own sister, Aruuke,

Gave birth to sons, both on the same day.
Both died in childbirth right after,
All by myself I could not save
Those poor widows from their bleak fate.
Keeping it secret from all people,
I did breastfeed the newborn sons.
I was afraid that wretch Kobosh
Would find and kill these two newborns.

I am the one who gave them names—
Gulchoro and Hanchoro.
Gulchoro was taken away
By an old man named Bai Madjik,
A close friend of Almanbet.
And Hanchoro was taken by
Chubak's father, Akbalta.
We made a decision on that day:
As soon as the boys matured,
We would tell them of their fathers
And introduce them to each other.
I can't believe my own eyes,
In my embrace, before me stand
My mighty heroes— young batyrs!"
Kanykei shed happy tears.

Old Atemir was also happy
Seeing the sons of beloved daughters
From Aruuke and Kanykei.
"And if true, these three batyrs,
My own daughter Kanykei
Breastfed as babies long ago,
I'm your grandfather— tai-ata!"
The joyful emir told to them all.
"To strengthen kinship and the peace
I give my own Tajik daughters'
Hands in marriage to the Kyrgyz.

Here, over Fergana valley,
The drums are beating, roaring kernei."
Old Atemir, to honor his grandchildren
Arranged the most lavish toi— a feast.

For his grandson Semetey, he gave
The hand of the beauty Chachykei,
The daughter of his close friend Shatemir.
He married his grandson Gulchoro
To a distant niece— a rare beauty.

And with vainglorious Hanchoro,
Resentment harbored deep in his heart.
"This greedy old man Atemir
Declared me as 'almost grandson'
For being breastfed by his daughter.
For his own grandsons he found brides,
Arranged a double wedding-toi,
But did not give that kalyng to me—
Without a bride I stay unmarried!

My father, valiant Chubak
Served Khan Manas until his last breath,
Near Chinese walls he met his death,
Before my birth I turned an orphan.
When Semetey became the khan,
My bosom brother and my friend,
As luck would have it, became a stranger,"
Grumbled the insulted Hanchoro.

Returned to their native land at last
Their beloved Ken Talas,
Kanykei and old Chiyirdy
With Semetey and his young wife,
The blissfully married Gulchoro,
And Hanchoro also with them—

Hiding his grudge, still a bachelor.
When the second toi called him to the wedding,
He told his friends he was unwell,
Making an excuse to avoid attending.
As one could see, deep in his soul,
From a grain of salt his bitterness grew.

Now as the khan of khans of clans
In the steppes, the ails, the cities grand,
The Kyrgyz mountains, all the land—
The son of Manas, Semetey,
Called for his own army-squad
The strongest batyrs from all around.
He taught them all the art of combat,
To fight by sword and with chokmor;
The tactic— backhand slash and hit.
The virtuous master Bolekbai
Taught young batyr some time ago
The bladesmith's tricks of forging steel
To clinch a solid shield for war.

When the Chinese kyzyl-chock arrived
The debt collectors came to Talas
Demanding tribute from each Kyrgyz.
Jigits were ordered to tie them up
And throw them into the deep zindan.
Learning of this, Chinese Konur
Into Talas sent his skilled squad.
Semetey met them with his troops,
Routed the offenders in a flash;
What was left of them ran from Talas!
So, clear it was to everyone—
Manas's son, Khan Semetey
Was just as mighty, just as bold
As his great father, whose deeds he was told.

Kanykei

MILITARY COUNCIL AT SEMETEY'S COURT

Gathered by Semetey in Talas,
Were batyrs, his relatives and friends.
"At his final hour bequeathed Manas,
To keep our people's unity
And take revenge upon Konur.
From newly hatched and fragile chicks,
Such fearless falcons I did raise;
I united our people from all the corners
To restore our mighty Khaganate.
We have the strength, we have the will,
And now I know that time is right
To crush our foe in his own den!
Arrange our people's Kurultai,
And move our mighty, fearless horde
On a great campaign to Chinese walls—
The slick Konur we'll finish off!
Any advice would you give me?"
Asked Semetey to the sitting court.

Just silence, not a single answer.
And even Khan Bakai, the sage,
Just sat there, cast his eyes way down.
So Kanykei stood up and said:
"My son, the apple of my eye!"
Before Manas, as God would see
You did fulfill your filial duty!

The Kyrgyz clans were all scattered—
You did unite them back to strength—
Now people have their true defense.
For that, I'm thankful to you, son!
I will ask you only once:
Do not start war with the Chinese;

Don’t go to those far offbeat lands—
China is great, invincible!
Amidst great floods that embraced the world,
Only China stayed unscathed.
And even Iskender the Great
Could not find ways he could invade!
From ancient times to present day
The Chinese live like ants in a heap.
The Chinese land—it swarms with people.
I pleaded with Manas, your father,
Not to go on his campaign.

To my appeals and teary prayers
Your father did not heed at all,
And troops he led to Chinese lands.
He captured the city Chet-Beijing,
Then the Chinese surrounded him
And slaughtered cold all of our troops
As in the ancient fate of Sodom.
With a mortal wound in his chest
He did return to his homeland;
As I became a black widow,
You were an orphan from the cradle.
The one who goes with sword to others
Will perish by the sword himself!
That is the teaching of the savior, Jesus.
My dear kara-chechekei, I beg—
Don’t go to China with a sword!”
Kanykei asked her son in tears.

“I will fulfill my father's wish!
No absolution for Konur!
He did not wound my father in battle,
Not in an er-sayish, but in the garden,
When our mighty Khan Manas
Came out to read his morning prayer!

Manas' holy words are such:
'For yesterday, today, tomorrow,
For all eternity henceforth—
Either in liberty, or death!'
I will return to my people again
Manas' lost and scolded honor!
And dear mother, if you can't
Wait for your son to return alive,
Then take your leave to Bukhara
And be in your own father's land!"
Said in his wrath young Semetey.

But here the Khan Bakai stood up:
"To get revenge on Konurbai,
No need to go marching to China.
Refuse to pay zeket tribute—
To our land he'll come himself
To drive away the herds and cattle.
On our land we'll settle scores,
Into a ring we'll drive Konur;
We'll kill them all, and for the death
Of our Manas we'll take revenge!
To avoid our enemies breaking us,
We ought to be strong, my dear son!
Because of constant Chinese raids
The Kyrgyz clans fled to different lands.

Into Altai some of us went,
Shygai went Jakyp's elder brother,
To Kashgar land with family fled.
His grandson rules that whole Kashgar,
The brave batyr Chynkojo.
And next to him, his friend Toltoy,
The khan of Jedigers, still a bachelor.
We need to let our brothers know
That Kyrgyz people wait for them.

A big return they have to make
To Ala-Too— our ancestors' land!
We'll be twice stronger, win any war!"

Semetey listened to the old man
And he agreed with him completely.
For a long road he equipped Bakai,
And Both Hanchoro and Gulchoro
Went with him to far Kashgar.

Semetey

BAKAI’S TRIP TO CHYNKOJO

Crossing the fields, crossing the woods,
Rough mountain rivers passing through,
They conquered the distance of the steppes,
Their skills as ferriers they tested,
Putting horseshoes on their dulduls.
Leaving Kashgar far behind,
The mountain paths of Kebez-Too,
They conquered the peak of Kyya-Jar,
And finally, were face to face
With the vast Khanate of Chyngojo.

Remembered old Bakai, that khan,
His two companions, two dear friends,
To Chyngojo introduced the old man.
“Before you, dear Chynkogo,
The son of Almambet, Gulchoro,
And Chubak's son Hanchoro.
Their fathers were killed in the war,
An orphan’s childhood they both shared
Among the warring relatives.

To you, their uncle, today they come,
Two young batyrs traveling with me
On great campaign to Chinese walls,
A war declared to Konurbai,
Shigai, your grandfather, knew of this.
We stormed the city Chet-Beijing
But kept the victory in hand—
We weren’t so numerous as the Chinese,
Scorning the batyrs who died there;
Grossly unequal the battle was,
And if you were with us that day

We would have defeated all Chinese!
When Manas left the world of the living,
You did not come to our Khan's wake
To throw a handful soil to his kumboz!
Forgive me, my dear Chyngojo,
I did bring up my old resentment;
So many years have passed since then,
And yet, we can't let go of the truth.

At this moment our Semetey
Rules this whole Khanate by himself.
All clans Kyrgyz that were dispersed,
He did unite into a stronghold.
He asks of you, of his own brother,
To rush back to the native land,
Unite our forces to be stronger.
When Konurbai pays us a visit,
We must give him a worthy jolt
And take revenge for Manas' death!"
Finished his speech old Bakai.

"Ata, I respected you all my life,
But now you tell me that I am
A big coward, a traitorous one—
It's not like that at all, ata!
As soon as I received the message,
That you were going into China,
I gathered all the warriors we had
And went to meet you on the road.
But my grandfather, old Shigai,
Blocked all the ways the roads for us.
In front of my soldiers, he told me:
'Do not go to China with Manas—
I had a horrific dream last night.
All of those batyrs will perish,
Manas himself will die of from wounds.

Only death will meet you there.
With war, my son, to Chinese walls,
I beg of you, please do not go!'
My warriors did not wish at all
To face the fate of inglorious death,
And halfway there we turned around.
Grandfather prophecized the truth:
The end of the campaign was cruel.
All the batyrs died that day.
With mortal wounds, Khan Manas
Alone returned to Ken Talas.
He asked forgiveness from the widows,
Orphans, and grief-stricken parents
For his contemptible campaign
Which all was planned by his so-called friend,
The Chinese traitor Almanbet."

"Enough!" shouted Gulchoro.
"So, as it turns out, for that result,
For the disastrous end of war
It's all my father's guilt alone?"
The angry man took out his sword.

"If truth you wish to know at all,
Please calm your anger, son, sit down,"
Said quietly, khan Chyngojo.
"Your own father Almanbet
Was born by a Kyrgyz mother;
His father was a Chinese Khan.
And with his brother Konurbai,
He did fight for the Chinese throne.
That mercenary Konurbai
Always spread slander on Alma.
Saving his mother and himself,
Almanbet ran to Manas.
He gained his trust, and all alone

Began to rule the whole Khanate.
And at the funeral in Karkyra,
The guests were there— Konurbai,
The khan of the Chinese, Neskara.
At the races, cunning Alma,
Wearing his old Chinese robe,
Forced all the visitors and fans
To cheer for Manas' Ak-Kula.
Breaking the rules of the game,
He gave the first prize to him,
Which caused such anger in Neskara.

The memorial toi, that evil night,
Ended in bloody homicide.
The khans of the six biggest clans
Came to agree amongst themselves
To drive out Almanbet from Talas
And ask Manas to leave the throne.
If he would not give up the right,
His rulership they'd overthrow.
Learning of this, his friend Alma
Crafted a cunning move instead:
To order all rebellious khans
To gather troops and go to China—
United clans would go to war.
They would kill two birds with that move—
Take revenge for the bloody wake,
And pacify the rebellious khans.

He did not know, gullible Manas,
That Almambet, his clever friend,
Had planned his own revenge instead.
He led the Kyrgyz warrior troops
Into his own home, into China,
With Khan Manas' own hand
He aimed to revive his scolded honor!

If you do not believe my words,
Bakai-ata will tell you all,"
Finished his story, Chyngojo.
"What is the sense of recalling all?
I am to blame as well for that,"
The old man Bakai pleaded, with guilt.
"To not repeat the same mistake,
We ought to be united now!
Please, dear son, come back to us!
Your people, they wait there for you;
Your brothers, relatives, and friends—
Khan Semetey calls you, his kin."

"Ata, I have respect for you, I do
But we will not return to Talas
While Semetey still reigns the land.
As soon as he gets all the power,
He'll start a campaign into China
And ruin thousands of his people.
Once young Manas and Khan Akunkhan
Swore to each other with an oath:
If each would have a son or daughter
They would be blessed as man and wife.
If sons are born, they'd be true friends.
His long-betrothed Ai-Churok
Waited for news for many years.

Manas' son married another—
Chachykey, daughter of Shatemir,
The bride of a friend of mine,
The khan of Jediger's Toltoi.
Your Khan Semetey became conceited,
Just as his father— so arrogant;
He puffs up like an air-filled chanach!"
Said to the batyrs, Chyngojo.

Gulchoro fought hard with his anger,
Unable to restrain himself,
With his kamchy hit Chyngojo on the head;
Unconscious, the owner fell onto bed.,
And Hanchoro took out his sword,
To cut the head off the slanderer.
But the respected aksakal
Did not let murder take place.
He led the two friends out of the yurt,
They jumped on their horses in a rush
And towards the mountains they galloped fast.

There was a committed barymta,
Driving away khan's grazing horses.
"Old man Bakai is meant to die,
Bring me his gray beard with his head!
And the two young men that were with him,
Tie them up and bring to me alive!"
Khan's warriors chased after the three
To fulfill the angry khan's order,
But they were too late, the fugitives,
And towards Talas went the herds of horses.

Bakai

KHAN TOLTOI DECIDES TO MARRY THE BEAUTIFUL AICHUROK

The khan of clans Jediger,
The young and rich Khan Toltoi,
Was quite unhappy with his fate.
As just a budding teenage boy,
He fell in love so deep and strong
With Chachykei, Shatemir's daughter
And counted the hours till she was sixteen.
The Bukharian Atemir's
Grandson married suddenly
To that very same Chachykei,
His one and only pretty niece.
And since that day, batyr Toltoi
Was down and out, humiliated,
Attended neither an ash nor toi
And lived alone in a big white yurt.

Came to the Toltoi, Khan Chyngojo,
Who chided his ponderous friend:
"Tell me, are you the khan, or what?
Atemir's grandson Semetey
Married your bride instead of you—
Humiliated you, insulted,
And you did not take your revenge!
What every khan should cherish most
Is his own dignity and honor!
And Aichurok, Akunkhan's daughter,
Still waits for her long betrothed
Son of Manas, young Semetey.
She's beautiful with a shapely body
Just as bright as the moon in the sky!
To mend and restore your honor
You ought to— have to marry her!

And if that insolent Semetey
With war will come after that fact
We'll both give him a decent fight—
He will not go away alive!”
Assured his old friend, Chyngojo.

Toltoi nodded in response.
Khan Chyngojo and Khan Toltoi
Uniting their troops into one horde,
Went on a campaign to Ooganistan
Where old Akunkhan ruled the land.

They did besiege the city Herat
And sent a letter to the palace:
“The honorable Akunkhan,
We come to you as true brothers.
Jediger’s khan, the Er Toltoi,
The rich and young, the bachelor,
Has learned of your fair Aichurok
With graceful face and gentle soul,
Bright as the moon in clear night's sky—
Your son-in-law he wants to become.

He’s ready to pay before the wedding
Any kalyng you deem is right.
We’ve come to you with this in mind,
But if you do not wish to give
Your only daughter to this Kyrgyz
We will destroy your great Herat—
By force we’ll take it, yes we will!”

Received the letter, Akunkhan,
And called his daughter Aichurok:
“Just months before you saw the light
To bond my friendship with Manas,
We shook hands, said if we had sons

The two would be the truest of friends.
If one of us would have a daughter,
And another had a son,
Soon as the right year approached
We'd let them wed as man and wife.
With our own blood we swore,
On our swords, two friends, two khans—
That is our sacred communion.

Manas' son Semetey
Is unaware of that oath.
The Bukharian Atemir
Married him to his niece Chachykei.
When Semetey learns of this
That his betrothed is waiting here—
With oath of fathers to fulfill,
He will come to ask her hand.
And now his enemy is here—
Toltoi, the khan of Jedigers.
Your own wedding, my dearest one,
Will turn into a bloody war.

When the nomad feels humiliated
He's cruel and so merciless.
Toltoi came in to ask your hand,
And if I give him fast refusal
He'll threaten to destroy our city.
And if I give your hand to him
I'll break the sacred oath I gave.
When I go to another world,
Manas will meet me as a friend,
From my own shame I'll burn in flames!
Or dear daughter, what should I do?"
The poor old man was in despair.

“I will resolve this, dear father!
All night and day I will beg God
That the Creator gives me wings,
And in the morning, I will fly;
Just like the ancient Greek Dedal,
I’ll search for my groom Semetey,
I’ll find him, wherever he lives.
If I become his lawful wife,
Into Herat we will return
And liberate my native city!
And if the groom refuses me,
By such an action Semetey
Will release you from oath.
My husband will be Khan Toltoi,
It means it’s written by my fate!”
Said Aichurok with crystal tears.

The father was very upset.
“The poor thing, from painful anguish
Gone mad, my dear one,” he thought.
In early morning the palace left
The girl that turned into a swan,
Circling around her town Herat
To her beloved, poor father.
With a flap of wings bidding farewell
She disappeared in the clouds.
Her father did not know of this,
And neither did that Khan Toltoi,
Nor Chyngojo, nor anyone,
Young maiden, beautiful Churok
Was flying over the sinful land
On wings of hopeful, future love.

Aichurok

AICHUROK'S FLIGHT TO SEMETEY

A long time flew as beautiful Churok
Admired the Earth from that height.
No human had seen such views of the lands—
So splendid from the bird's eye flight;
The lakes, the rivers, and the seas
The villages, the steppes, and cities.
And suddenly she saw someone,
A stately batyr in the mountains.

"Could this man be my Semetey?"
The spontaneous thought she had at once.
She flew up closer to the man—
It was that old mean Konurbai!
"The Chinese reign has not yet ended…"

Now she saw the valley of the rivers
Ken-Kol, Talas, the place wherein
Was buried batyr Khan Manas
And Aichurok, reading the Quran.
She saw in the mountains that very camp
Where Semetey, in a hunting match,
Joked with his friends about the sport.

Cooking the game, they caught on fire—
Komuz and laughter were heard in the mountains,
Akyn, the lively, witty guy,
Was singing love songs seketbai.
A little further, on mountain skirts,
Batyrs on horseback zeroed in.
On a single thread hung a jamby.
And there he was sitting on a horse,
Wearing his marten tebetei
In an embroidered khan's chapan—

Manas's one son, Semetey.
He was taller than other men,
The fire burning in his eyes
Was brighter than two lit candles,
His arms open to all that was good,
Black curls fell down to his shoulders,
The light shined through within his soul
Just like the sun at the dawn of day.
His face reflected that divine light
Brighter than the moon at night.

Felt instant love, young Aichurok,
So deep in love with Semetey!
Up to the clouds and out of reach
She sped upwards, spreading her wings
To heights that arrows could not meet.
She flew a long time over the fire,
Adoring the sight of her beloved.
Just round and round flew Aichurok—
She could not take eyes from him
Till dark of night changed the day.
She folded her wings, fairy Churok,
Turned to a pretty girl again
And walked to the old khan's white yurt.

From out the yurt came Chachykei
In all of her majestic beauty—
Her beautiful and gentle face
And gracious pace like a gazelle.
From silk her elecheck was made;
Two long, black braids up to her toes.
The braided silver shined and rang
With every step, a woven chapak.
Her neck hugged golden, coral beads
So gracefully, just like a maral.
She approached Churok in staidly step,

With arrogant and prideful look,
And greeted the unexpected guest.
The girl of such beauty, Chachykei,
Had not met here since she came.
This stranger, suddenly in tears
Fell to her knees and said to her:
“My dear, beautiful khanum,
The kindest person in the world,
I’m begging you now at your feet,
Akunkhan’s daughter, Aichurok.
The khan of Jediger’s Toltoi,
They say he was your suitor once.

Still a bachelor, with wounded pride,
He came to my land, Ooganistan.
His troops he brought into Herat,
And from my father he demands
To give his daughter as a wife.
And if he denies the daughter’s hand,
He will destroy the whole city,
Burn all, and forcibly take me away.
Khan Chyngojo and Khan Toltoi
Prepare a military campaign;
They will declare war on Talas,
Plans to destroy Khan Semetey
And seize all power by such force.
In this cruel, tribal war
The people will die, none will remain.

When khans Manas and Akunkhan
Formed their military alliance,
They gave each other a sacred oath:
When one of them would have a son
And the other had a daughter
They'd turn into a man and wife.
To keep the peace, enforce the friendship,

So, all the tribes will live in truce.
I beg of you, my dear khanum,
Take me into your family,
As your own sister I will be.
I will conduct by Shari'ah laws,
And our common dear spouse
Will not be jealous of you.
I will then become your slave,
I'll cook your food and sew your clothes—
Together we will live as family.
I won't mind if he's with you all day,
All night he'll spend with you till dawn.

And if one day, or maybe two,
Semetey wants to spend with me
He'll be my joy and light of day.
I'll be so happy at that moment;
When I feel his chest so close,
I'll hear his most revered heartbeat.

And if our love produces children,
The way the Kyrgyz salt dictates,
As loved, respected, elder mother,
The children will refer to you.
My father, old Khan Akunkhan,
Will be so happy before his death
If he's able to keep his oath,
That Manas's son Semetey
Becomes his only son-in-law.
Both cities, Talas and Herat,
From the invaders we will save!"
Said Aichurok with tearful eyes.

"Where did you come from, nasty snake—
Into our bed crawled out of nowhere?
If you're in such of need of husband

Go look for him someplace else!
Before he sees your sight in here,
Get out this instant, I demand!”
In anger screamed Chachykei.
“I’ll call the guards!
I’ll have your tongue!
I’ll order they cut off your head,
Or by your braids right on this branch
I’ll hang you with my own bare hands!
If you still have a will to live—
Get out of here, you wicked witch!”
Screamed the evil beauty Chachykei.

“I came to you with common good,
With hope that I would find in you
A true friend, or maybe a sister.
And we could save dear Semetey
From bloody war and cruel slaughter,
From relatives so green with envy,
So he can keep in unity
The Kyrgyz people and khan’s throne!
But what I saw just from your words—
The most important part for you
Is a lustful bed and empty power!
I swear by earth and skies above,
Your Semetey will be just mine!

When Khan Semetey with his men
Passes the mountainous roads one day
I'll turn into a roll of silk
And spread myself along the trail;
As if upon the great big Silk Road
That roll was lost by accident
By a caravan of Chinese merchants!
And in the light of moon at night,
The oath of fathers I will tell—

And turn to his beloved wife!
Your Semetey will be just mine!
In case that will not realize—
I'll turn into a golden fish
With scales that glisten gold and silver.
When he comes to catch that fish,
I'll press my cheek onto his chest—
Your Semetey will be just mine!
In case that will not realize—
I'll become a big, white swan,
And I'll start scrolling overhead.
Once falcon Ak-Shumkar flies up
I'll capture him up in the heavens,
Take him to mountains in my hands!

And Semetey will run right after;
Stepping on the morning dew
To him I'll come in all my glory—
Your Semetey will be just mine!
I called for goodness, dear sister,
And begged you, sobbing at your feet.
The one, who's merciless and cruel,
Will have no mercy from this fate.
For this, Chachykei, you will pay,
All of your life you will be barren—
God's punishment for your cold heart.
Your suffering will last forever!"
Said the heated Aichurok.
Turning into a graceful swan,
She spread her wings and soared above.

HOW SEMETEY LEARNED ABOUT AICHUROK

On one of those bright, sunny days,
Semetey came out from his yurt.
He called the squad and closest friends,
Ordered to saddle all the horses,
Sharpen the arrows, check the bowstrings,
And test the falcon Ak-Shumkar—
The ancestral gift from his father.
When his choro and the hunters,
With all the gears and hunting dogs,
Lead by taigan Kumayik,
Had gathered near the khan sarai,
Before the start of lengthy road,
Thought Semetey to see his wife.

Toward him came out his Chachykei
With horse's bridle, blocking the way,
"My khan! Please listen to my words!
Stay here with me and don't go hunting,
I had a bad dream the other night:
You'll have bad luck on your way!
Khan Semetey got very angry,
With fury in his voice exclaimed:
"How dare you, you stupid woman,
Hold this bridle and block my way?
What will I do here at home?

So silent as if in the grave,
Where one can't hear a children's laughter?
As man and a wife, we've lived so long,
And to this day your hem is empty!
I'm dying here of melancholy!
Get out of my way! Let me go!"

He struck his wife with kamchy,
And ordered the squad to follow him.

"What's wrong with her?" thought Semetey.
“She’s usually obedient and tender.
Or could it be that she is pregnant?”
Thinking in such way Semetey,
He sent his choro to Chachykei.
And so, she said to Gulchoro:
“Such an ominous dream I had.
For it to not become reality
I ask of you just one thing:
If you see upon your way
A roll of luxurious silk—
By any means, at any cost,
Do not let him to touch that silk!

If on the banks of highland river
You catch the shiniest of fish—
I ask of you, my dear choro,
Let go of that fish instantly!
If on the shore you come to see
A white swan that flutters its wings,
Seducing you and calling you,
Then suddenly, flies very high—
Make sure that our Semetey
Won’t let Shumkar chase after her!
This dream's details, dear Gulchoro,
No one should know except us two!
If you fulfill my request,
I’ll be so generous to you:
I’ll find for you an amazing beauty,
You’ll have a new wife— young tokol!
Your life will be a paradise!”

“I am your servant, my khanum!
Your word is high command for me!
I swear to you, I will succeed!”
With his right hand he struck his chest
And back to the khan he trotted away.
Passing the bank of river Talas
Khan Semetey saw on the road
A big, green roll of flowy silk.
“Seems that this road was traveled by
The Chinese merchants’ caravan.
I’ll give this silk to my sullen wife.”
Khan Semetey made his plan.

Gulchoro picked up the treasure,
Saying: “God does not favor us!”
The roll of silk he dropped from the cliff.
The khan called halt from their long trip
Along the river banks to rest.
In shallow water saw Semetey
A miraculously shiny fish.
Like bars of gold or shiny coins
The scales were glittering on it,
So ordered khan to his henchmen
To catch that fish and hand it to him.
Gulchoro went down to the river,
But could not catch that lustrous fish:
The river stream took it away.

And suddenly the whole squad and khan
Saw a gracious, lovely white swan
Spreading her strong wings to the clouds.
She clapped and called to follow her—
So Semetey took his Chumkar
And untied jesses from its claws.

Alarmed, Gulchoro ran to his khan;
With haste, he wanted to keep Shumkar:
“Don’t you see, my dearest khan,
The white swan that flew to the skies
Is not lovely, but old and frail?
Is it not better to come home
And have a fat goose for a meal?
Besides, that swan seemed in a rush—
It might have a cygnet, or even two!
And Ak-Shumkar can’t catch this swan,
Your falcon is old, too slow to move!”

But Semetey did not listen.
He took off the jesses from its wings
And let his falcon after the swan.
The white swan soared up in the sky,
And circling over the camp,
Bidding farewell with her wings
She evanesced from out their sight.
Khan’s falcon flew right after her—
In vain they waited for a few hours
To no sign of Ak-Shumkar.

And khan, so cross with his close friend
Called Gulchoro into his yurt:
“Well, tell me now, my dearest friend,
What’s lately going on with you?
Today, we found a roll of silk—
You threw it out right off the cliff!
You could not catch that shiny fish—
It got away with the river's stream!
Your talk with my wife Chachykei,
You never mentioned in any way.
And when the jesses I let go,
You told me Ak-Shumkar is old!
And where is now my Ak-Shumkar?

You have to find him— and be quick!
And if you come without him, then,
Alive you won't return back home!"
Said in his wrath, Khan Semetey!

So Gulchoro then returned back home,
Entered into the khan's white yurt:
"Khanum, answer me at once!
Who threw the roll of silk on trail?
Who put that shiny fish in water?
What is that swan that circled there?"
Demanded angry Gulchoro.
"I do not understand your questions—
I was not there with you on the hunt!
All of these questions, you should ask
The one who had with you that fun!"
With sneering voice said Chachykei.
Did not expect this, Gulchoro,
Her brazen words made him so furious.

Grabbing her by the braids
He drew his dagger out of his scabbard.
"For losing falcon Ak-Shumkar,
Semetey wants my head on the block!
Tell me this instant, the whole truth!"
Pressing her head against kerege
He pushed his dagger to her throat.
Under such threat, Chachykei
In tears told him the whole story.
How Ai-Churok came to her,
The oath the fathers made long ago,
Akin to which Semetey must
Clear Herat from its enemies.

Gulchoro was very happy—
He bent his knees before khanum,
Asked to forgive him for the threat.
He rushed back to tell his khan
And claim suyunchu for this news.
Gulchoro galloped to the river,
Saw Semetey in the distance,
And roared as loud as he could:
“Suyunchu, khan! Suyunchu!

I brought some joyful news for you
About your falcon Ak-Shumkar—
Your falcon is with Aichurok!
Long time ago, when neither you
Nor beautiful maiden Churok
Were even born, two friends—
Akunkhan and Manas—
Shook on a deal and made an oath:
If a son and daughter each they had
They would be married as man and wife!

Your bride has been waiting for long,
So when she got tired of waiting
As a white swan she flew above
And came to us into Talas.
Flying high into the sky,
She deeply fell in love with you.
Shumkar she took back to Herat
And waits for the arrival soon
Her groom, beloved Semetey!
All glory for her wit and beauty!

As our people’s salt demands,
For me, delivering these news
You have to give that suyunchu!”
Exclaimed excited Gulchoro.

Shaking the heavens and the valleys
Mountains, steppes and all the woods,
Over the Kyrgyz lands echoed
A loud “Hurray” under the sky.
Khan Semetey’s thought was as such:
“Perhaps the young maiden Churok
Will give me sons as well as daughters,
Manas’s blood will keep on going,
And by the blessing, one of them
Will lead, protect my native people!”

The heart of the batyr was pleased.
Command he gave unto his troops:
“Go on and campaign to Herat!
Defeat Toltoi and Chyngojo!
And free Churok and Ak-Shumkar!”

When Aichurok turned into a white swan and flew to Talas, Akunkhan ordered his brother Tumenbai to join Chingojo and Toltoi in negotiations to report the disappearance of his daughter and asked to lift the siege of Herat until she was found.
Chyngojo and Toltoi removed the siege, left a small squad in the city, and waited for an answer. Semetey's troops approached Ooganistan, and Gulchoro went on the scout.

SEMETEY'S MEETING WITH AICHUROK

When the seasoned scout Gulchoro
Secretly approached Herat,
He did not see around the capital
The siege, nor the squads of foes.
Only silence, bliss all around.
“Maybe the falcon was kidnapped
By someone else, not Aichurok?”
Along the trail that leads to the city
There was no entrance and no gates,
Only a wall that was limitless.
“What if I go to southern side—
Is there a gate?” thought Gulchoro.
From the south side the city was
Protected by a stormy river
Almost impossible to wade,
No one could swim through this wild river.

The stream would surely carry away,
No one would find that senseless body.
Gulchoro was still on the fence:
Go back, Semetey would cut off his head;
If forward he'd decide to go,
The river stream would take his soul—
Both ways promised him sure death!
Ahead, he saw on the other side
About a dozen vibrant tents;
In outfits of silk and satin,
The beauties walked without their guards.
The swings, the songs, the merry laughter
Depicted youth and innocence.
They seemed women from all the world
Gathered for requiescence.
So many beauties all at once,

Choro had not seen in his life.
The young and handsome man of wit,
He never thought he'd witness this.
When he approached the river bank,
The girls rushed to the other side
And they began to call for him.
Could not resist, young Gulchoro—
His bravery he wanted to show.
The moment he jumped into the water
The stream of river engulfed him whole.

The girls all panicked and they sobbed,
But they could not help him at all.
The river stream foamed with its force,
Carried the horse and its poor rider;
Into the mountain fall it turned
And death approached so quick in pace.
But his mighty horse, Taiburul,
The heavy breaker overcame!
Gulchoro came out to the shore
All wet and bloody, but alive.

The girls came rushing to the hero
(Each one more beautiful than the next),
And gave him hugs and warm kisses.
Choro pinched himself many times
He could not think it to be real—
Like a fool he laughed in disbelief.

One of them, in her airy dress
A white veil on her fair face,
With graceful gait she did approach.
"Where are you from? Where are you going?
And why, tell me, you risked your life
Into the foamy stream you rushed?"
With a hint of mockery, she said.

“In front of you, my dear jene,
Is Almanbet’s son Gulchoro.
My khan is your groom Semetey.
His father is batyr Manas.
You flew to see us in Talas
And took his falcon before our eyes.
With one request I came to you:
Return Ak-Shumkar to us,”
On one bent knee asked Gulchoro.

“Oh, no, no, and no!
What other wishes has your khan?”
Again, with mockery she said.
“He wants to marry! That is all!”
Laughing, answered Gulchoro.
“Well let him come and I will wait,
To give the falcon to him then,”
Coyly said Aichurok.
Five days and five nights had passed
Since Gulchoro went on that trip.
No news from him— this worried khan:
“Could it be my choro was killed?
Or that mean, envious Chyngojo
Caught him and put him in zindan?”
These thoughts ran in Semetey’s mind.

Decided he to save the choro
And moved into Herat with his squad.
They met neither siege nor enemies;
The city was fenced in a wall,
Protected by a ferocious river.
As men approached the boisterous stream,
Girls shouted out: “Jezdeke!”
Greeting to the squad and chirping.
In front there was the strongest current,

The horse that was right under him
Could not go through such powerful waters—
Saw no solution, Semetey.

Sary-Kyz suddenly appeared.
With gesture of hand, she gave a signal—
All water was at once engulfed
By a secret channel underneath.
When every warrior strode off
On the dry and pebbled base of the river,
Kara-Kyz suddenly appeared,
Lifted her hand— the other signal—
So the seething stream of river water
Ran through the channel yet again.
In a graceful, proud gait approached,
With white veil on her fair face
The young maiden, Aichurok.
"Welcome to Herat, my khan!

Tell, what brings you to our parts?
Besides, I do not understand
What made your brother Gulchoro
In front of all call me "jene."
As I remember, I've never been
A daughter-in-law to Kyrgyz people.
My groom is Zhediger Toltoi,
And I will be his faithful wife!"
Aichurok said haughtily.

"Allow me to explain, dear Khanum,
But first I will ask you this:
Why did you fly to Talas?
And where is my falcon Ak-Shumkar?
Maybe, you've heard about the fact
That many, many years ago,
Your father, glorious Akunkhan,

And my late father, batyr Manas,
Created a military alliance:
Became best friends and equal partners
And with their oath wished us to wed?
I came to you, my dear khanum,
To fulfill our fathers' oath.
This is my duty to my Manas,”
Semetey said sarcastically.

“Oh, no! I’ve never heard!
I only learn about it now!”
Aichurok flirted and balked.

“Well, please, excuse me! I am sorry!
It seems I’m spreading lies in here!”
As Semetey went to his horse,
Aichurok took off her veil,
Showing her face, her starry eyes;
The fierce khan could not resist—
He’d never seen such celestial beauty!
So slender, graceful as a white swan,
As if on snow a drop of blood,
Her lips were bright, a scarlet red.
Her eyes were black but shined so bright,
Burned as two stars on the darkest night.

Her face was fair and light in tone
Like the clear moon up in the sky.
“Ah, Aichurok, it seems your name
Was given to you by providence!”
Maternal warmth, full of affection,
Her sensual manner and playfulness
He felt with every breath she took.
That very moment he fell in love
With a bride who was destined to be his
Taking his sword out of the scabbard,

He bent his knee to Aichurok
And begged forgiveness or for death.
Churok lifted him off his knees,
Embraced him tenderly, with love,
Her tearful eyes tuned to the beats
Of hearts that pulsed for one another.

Then came a moment of rare bliss
When a male and female enter
In each other's souls and flesh,
Escaping to another world
Where no one knows of earthly bustles,
No fight for power, no need for wealth,
Only the love, dreams, and affection,
A fiery passion inside the heart—
The gift that god gave each of us.

Aichurok spoke: "My dear beloved,
I will give you so many children,
And to my final days of life
We will be happy, you and I."
In the hush of night, she did caress,
Whispered so gently Aichurok.

On that unreal starry night,
Two fathers' dreams came true at last!
After so many years of waiting
The bride and groom finally met!
The myriad stars from heavens
With heed and love looked down on them.

That's how married Aichurok
The Kyrgyz batyr Semetey.
The Holy Spirit of Khan Manas,
His blessing gave the ecstatic children.
Old Akunkhan was very happy:

A long-awaited son-in-law!
Herat would remember that famous wedding—
Nine days in a row they celebrated.

THE DEFEAT AND DEATH OF TOLTOI AND CHYNGOJO

Chyngojo learned about the wedding
Called in Toltoi to build new plans:
Unite their troops, surround Herat,
Defeat Semetey, and capture Churok.
“I do not want that cunning bitch!
She’s been already with a different dog!”
Disgustingly said Khan Toltoi.

“Then I will take Churok myself!”
And ride her well all through the night.
In the morning she will pay
I’ll put her backwards on a shabby ass
And deliver her like that
To the Kyrgyz, into Talas.
And we will seize all of the power!”
Swore to his friend, Chyngojo.

They reached conclusion, shook on it
With a battle force so big and strong,
Under the red banner with a moon
Went forth with war on Ooganistan
To lay siege on Herat city.

The head of Noiguts, Chyngojo,
Sent his demands to Akunkhan:
“Open the city gates at once!
And give his daughter to Toltoi!
Deliver him, Khan Semetey,
To execute him on the square!
If not, the old khan Akunkhan
Will face prison, and then be killed;
His city will be burned to ashes,
Not even one soul will be spared!”

Old Akunkhan was so bewildered,
Panicking, the poor old man.
His daughter, Aichurok told him:
“To save our people from this war,
To avoid fire on our city,
To save my husband and my father
I’m ready to sacrifice myself!
I will go to our enemies—
No matter who, Chyngojo, Toltoi.
And you, my love, dear Semetey,
Head to Talas, and do it fast!
Prepare your people, keep your power!

And you, dear father, giving my hand,
Arrange a lavish wedding- toi.
I’ll never turn into a foe’s wife—
By night I’ll drink a mortal poison
And quickly go to another world!”
Said firmly, spirited Churok.

“No, Aichurok! It won't be so!
I’ll never allow another man
To denounce and sneer at my wife!
I will destroy my enemy!
Even by the price of life I will
Stand for my love and dignity!”
Shouted in anger Semetey.
And he, using the darkest night,
To enemies that slept outside,
Inflicted wreck by sudden fight.
The ground was covered with corpses,
The blood that spilled turned into lakes.

The avid archer Gulchoro
Killed the noigut Khan Chyngojo.

After Toltoi ran, Hanchoro
Cut off his hand with his sword.
Toltoi's horse Surkoen
Rushed away with his rider.
Semetey's horse Taiburul—
In every battle, a true duldul—
Caught up with Toltoi; Semetey
Cut off his head right on that race
And dumped his headless body down!
He took Surkoen by the bridle—
Hanchoro and Gulchoro
Disputed who would ride that horse.
Which one of them would win the fight,
Be worthy of such trophy horse?

Not to offend his two best friends,
Said Semetey with a hint of humor:
"Toward me gallop both of you—
The one who first grabs on the leash
Will be new owner of this horse!"

So Hanchoro and Gulchoro
With cheering whistles of their friends
Raced to the prize with all their speed.
As promised, Semetey threw the leash—
As Gulchoro grabbed it first,
Khan Semetey gave Surkoen
To his beloved, favorite friend.
Hanchoro was quite offended:
"It was not Gulchoro, but me,
Who cut the hand off that Toltoi.
But no, I didn't get anything,"
Grumbled the envious Hanchoro.

SEMETEY STARTS A CAMPAIGN AGAINST KONURBAI

With sunrise on a clear day
Over the valleys Ken Kol, Talas,
Thundered the pleading dobulbas.
That moment all men in the squad
Had gathered at Semetey's court.

To old Bakai said Semetey:
"There is no peace for me, aba—
I see batyrs in every dream.
This morning, at the break of dawn
They came to me, lead by my father.
Ominous, brave Almanbet,
Sat equipped on a battle horse;
Fearless Chubak right next to him;
Courageous young batyr Syrgak;
In brotherhood sworn to Manas
The brave and valiant Kazakh
Kokcho; and right next to him I saw
The leader of Kemins— Urbu.
A silent scorn they had in their eyes,
As if they blame me for the fact
That it was taking me so long
My sacred duty to fulfill—
For death of the batyrs and father,
From the Chinese, I took no kun.

I can't go on like this anymore!
I have to, abake, Bakai,
Against China march with my squad
And kill Konurbai on the spot!
Take my revenge for batyr's death!
You knew the roads to Beijing—
The only one alive from the war.

And people say, with Manas you were
The sharpest eye in the dark of night.
The troops you led to every battle—
Each one ended with a triumph!

“Listen my son, dear Semetey—
I thought for many days and nights,
Why did we go with war on China,
To unfamiliar, far strange land?
China is great, invincible,
No sense to war with such a foe!
When the world was taken by floods,
Only China remained unharmed.
Even victorious Iskender the Great
Towards China found no paths.

We took the siege of Chet-Beijing
And all of China opposed us.
We fought, without sparing a life,
Unequal forces were there though;
Batyrs all died, and so Manas.
Prophet Isa once said such thing:
‘The one who goes with the sword
Will perish by that sword himself.’
Who is to blame?
Can you tell me?”
The respected elder asked Semetey.

“In all of us are guilty ones—
In Almanbet and Khan Manas.
When Khan Manas had realized
The conspiracy of six clans’ khans;
Their goal was overthrow Manas
And if his throne he wouldn't give up—
The whole world would take him from power.
He summoned all khans to Talas

And gave them order just as so:
‘I’m not your enemy, your foe
He sits behind the wall of China!
They are Neskara and Konurbai,
And in the valley, Karkyra.
Our ceremonial ash— our wake—
Turned into bloody massacre.
They are preparing for campaign
To ruin, wipe out the Kyrgyz race.
In order to defeat our foe
We must be first in our attack!

Need to unite as one khaganate,
Into one fist we'll gather power
On a great campaign against China
We will fight as one mighty horde.
And those who will not go with me
Will go back home without their head!’
Threatened the khans mighty Manas.
‘Victorious we’ll impose our power
So all will know that Khan Manas
Is mighty, strong, invincible.’
Such wrong advice gave him, his friend,
The cunning Chinese Almanbet.

He did not suspect, naive Manas,
That runagate, his Almanbet
Had planned revenge on Konurbai,
Led Kyrgyz troops to his homeland
Using Manas’s scary hand
All to revive his own honor.
‘I know China all too well,
It’s full of gold and goods and silver,
The finest silks and sundry teas.
Trust me, these Chinese men
Cannot sit properly on a horse.

Seeing these horde on their steeds,
Without a fight they will surrender,
We will return with our prized trophies
To our home we all come back,'
Assured us that Almanbet.
We all became enthusiastic
With that campaign to Chinese lands.
The deadliest of all the battles
Awaited us in Chinese walls.
And all of my companions
Laid down their heads in that war!

It was conceived by Khan Manas—
Calamitous, its oversight!
After we buried our men,
With Khan Manas we turned around
(He almost bled to death that day).
Passing the Chinese barrages
Suddenly men saw in the distance
A single horse had followed us.
Still holding on the bridle was,
With one hand over Sarala's neck,
The lifeless body of Almanbet.
It seemed that the whole Chinese land
Did not want to accept his dust.
In banishment from his own land
With foreign troops against his country
The bloodiest of wars he started,
Ruining so many lives.

If mighty god absolved his sins,
The Kyrgyz fate would not be forgiven,
Descendants would pay for that mistake."
Without wiping away his tears,
Finished his tale, old Bakai.

“I understand you, dear aba!
There is no exit out of this!
I have decided long time ago
To put at stake my life and death.
Let it be so, if I die in battle,
Paying this debt is more important!
I will not go to all of China—
I don’t care for silk or different teas—
I only need that Konurbai!
He hit my father, not in a fight,
Nor in er-sayish when the two competed—
He hit a praying man in a garden!
This malice I am here to punish!
I’ll penetrate Konurbai’s camp
And make him pay for that mistake!”
Answered his elder, Semetey.

“It seems you've turned out like your father.
When Khan Manas was so obsessed,
It was in vain to dispute him!
Make up your mind according to duty,
And may the God himself protect you!”
Gave him his blessing, old Bakai.

With break of dawn, first light of day,
The rays of sun reflected on the helmets
Of dashing warriors, on steely spears.
War signs, red banners with green moons,
Fluttered for foes to see and fear.
In front of the squad, the chilling horde,
Strode back and forth fierce Semetey.
The sword he had was Ak-Albars—
The merciless weapon of Manas.
His horse, the one and only Taiburul,
With the bits between his teeth
In every battle, was a victorious duldul.

And next to him— his favorite heroes:
Both Hanchoro and Gulchoro.

To meet them, came out of Ak-Orgo
The beautiful Aichurok, with worry.
She took the horse's leash and spoke:
"Oh, my khan! My only lord!
I had the most frightening dream.
In it, Taiburul, your faithful horse
Came home alone, without you!
The saddle had your helmet, ak-olpo—
My dear lord, I am afraid
You won't come back from this alive!
I beg you, please, do not go!"
Poor Aichurok said, in tears.

"Some say if batyrs meet on the road,
A passing fox is a sign of luck.
And if by the strike of fate
A woman crosses on that path—
Don't wait for luck of any form.
Did you think that hearing you
I'd turn all these batyrs around?
They would think I was afraid!
Get out of my way!" Semetey shouted,
Hitting his wife with a kamchy.
He led his batyrs on their campaign—
Standing far along the river,
All the kids, the wives, the elders,
Praying that the God Almighty
Keep their family from harm…

SEMETEY'S CAMPAIGN TO CHINA

The gray-haired ruler Konurbai
Routinely maintained his possessions,
And as always, first he chose
To check the wellness of his herds.
They grazed the grass on river banks
The Irtysh was full of horses.
Each stallion stately, one of a kind,
Dark bay, chestnut, and pitch black.
Among them there was the winged horse—
Algara, Konurbai's racer.
The fast-paced, winged horse Algara
Could not catch up with him in race.

Manas's tulpar, great Ak-Kula,
Seeing his master, the only rider,
Rushed to his friend Algara.
Khan Konurbai was so upset,
Hugging the neck of his faithful friend.
"With you, my loyal confidant,
Not one, but many combats won.
Each time, my dear you saved my life,
And now we're old, both you and I.
May God give us in our old age
Well-being and long fought for peace."

The mighty racehorse Algara
Submissively bowed his head,
And there came old Karakul
With his report to Konurbai:
"My khan! Our borders have been approached
By Kyrgyz squads, an impressive horde,
Right now, they've made it on the shore—
Got off their horses for a rest!

With squad approaches us to kill
Manas's son— Khan Semetey!
The squads, they want to seize our lands,
With quick attacks they plan to kill!"

With anger screamed Khan Konurbai:
"When Khan Manas came to China
I am the one who wounded him!
And if his son comes with a war,
He won't return back home alive!"
In sly disguise, so Khan Bakai
Would not be able to recognize,
Konurbai wore a poor shepherd's coat,
A hat of simple Chinese men,
Charged his gun and hid it well.
On bantam donkey he drove the sheep
Towards the river, as if to water.

And there sat, warming by the fire,
Batyrs and old sage Khan Bakai.
The young warrior stood next to him—
As if Manas was resurrected!
So tall, broad-shouldered, with strong arms,
With courage, valor on his face.
On both sides he had agile friends
They looked like twins, both tough as nails,
Laughing and joking around the fire.

Admired that sight Konurbai,
Started to think about his fate.
"I've known both— the wealth and power,
Even defeated mighty heroes,
But God did not give me a son,
One who could protect the people,
So I, at least at this old age,
Could rest from all these bloody wars.

What are they for? Why do we fight?
Can we not grant desired peace—
Not only to our nemesis,
But to our own, our native people?
The Kyrgyz people say this proverb:
‘In the name of peace and all that is good,
Give your own mother as a wife
To the murderer of your father
And you will be closer to him
Compared to his own offspring’s.

If God would give me a son,
I’d send him to the Kyrgyz people
So, he could offer Semetey
To forget the enmity of fathers,
Form an alliance and protect
Both of our nations from more wars.”
Thinking this way, he well decided
To send a messenger with an offer
That he was ready to pay kun
For Khan Manas and all his squad.
And send an invite to Khan Sarai,
To Kyrgyz people, by Konurbai!

But then he heard how old Bakai
Said to batyrs by the fire:
“Just now our scouts have reported
There is no way, there's guards all round.
We cannot breach the Chinese khan!”

“We’ll find the path, kill Konurbai!”
Said Semetey laughingly.
Khan Konurbai could not resist—
Took out his gun, he lit the wick;
He took a shot, that fateful bullet
Right in the chest Semetey was hit!

Everyone rushed to find the shooter
But all was vain— he got away.
Lost consciousness, Khan Semetey,
As blood flowed from the gunshot wound.
Old man Bakai took out his knife,
Tried all his skills to pull out the bullet,
But failed in that dreadful task.
And then the old sage said:
“There is a legend among our people
That a bullet could only be pulled out
By the faithful wife of that batyr—
The one who’s pure, without a sin,
And except her husband, no one else
Has ever seen under her hem.

Let second wife, the young tokol,
Step over him to heal that shot.
And if she is without a sin
The bullet will come out itself.
So, dear son, get Aichurok,
As long as Khan Semetey’s alive!”

Putting the saddle on Taibirul
Gulchoro rushed to Talas.
When poor Aichurok discovered
That Semetey had a gunshot wound,
She could not hold back bitter tears.
“How could that awful dream I had
Turn true— why did he not believe?”
The tears rolled down her pretty face.
In that moment, she turned to a swan,
Spread her wings, and flew to the sky.

Semetey was not conscious—
He'd lost much blood from the wound.
Stepped over her husband, Aichurok—
The bullet did stay on his chest!
Repeating, “God, forgive me, please,”
She stepped over him once again.
The bullet did not leave his chest!
The time was short, more blood was lost.
“I thought that Aichurok was clean,
Was I mistaken about her?”
Thought sage Bakai to himself.

“Maybe Chachykei knew this
And spread the news among the people:
When Semetey spent nights with her,
His first wife, the older baibiche,
Within the yurt of his tokol
This young, promiscuous Aichurok
Was visited by Gulchoro all night,
Shaming his khan and his friend.”

Hiding her face behind her hands
Sobbed bitterly Aichurok.
“My God, am I considered as sinner?
Besides my husband, I've never known
A single man in all my life!
When I, turning into a swan,
Flew to my groom in ken Talas,
From bird’s eye view right then I saw
A slender man in the mountains
And I, thinking it's my beloved
I started coming down at first.
When I saw that man’s face-
I almost turned around to home!
It was that cursed one— Konurbai!
I was mistaken, my dear God!

Forgive me for that thoughtless sin!”
Shed bitter tears, Aichurok.
“I will step over one last time,
And if still the bullet stays
That moment I'll fly to the skies,
Lay down my wings and take my life!”
Firmly decided Aichurok.
And for the third time she stepped over
And the lead fell from his chest!
The pain subsided; the bleeding stopped
The heart start pounding again!
Opened his eyes Khan Semetey,
At the feet of his true beloved.
So, all batyrs, without a loss,
Returned back home, to Talas.
In honor they arranged a toi,
To celebrate their khan’s return.

KONURBAI STARTS A CAMPAIGN TO TALAS

Konur, hearing that Semetey
Returned back home alive and well,
Gathered his people for a meeting.
Demanding a military parade,
He held his speech in front of all.
“A quarter century ago,
Khan Kokotey had left this world.
The Kyrgyz khan was known around,
We were invited to Karkyra
To his memorial wake, his ash.

There was my father Alooke,
And our late Khan Neskara,
The Kalmyk hero, Khan Joloy.
Calling all guests to that ash,
The Kyrgyz people insulted us.
Boasting with their squad’s skills and force,
Manas himself incited them.
The traitor, sneaky Almanbet,
Deceived us all at at-chabysh—
A baige of two thousand horses
To Khan Manas gave that mean liar!

On kurosh, old Khan Koshoy
Kicked the defeated Khan Joloy—
Lying on the ground he overstepped,
Insulting the khan for all to see.
Joloy did not put up with that,
And planned a heist at night in revenge.
The memorial ash the Kyrgyz had called
Ended in bloody massacre.
And then, that traitor, Almanbet,
Led Khan Manas to war on China.

The Kyrgyz troops took Chet-Beijing—
United then all Chinese people,
They rose to fight the enemy!
Their well-praised hero Manas
Died with his horse on our own land!
And now his son, Khan Semetey
Prepares a campaign against us,
Giving an oath to their God
For the death of his father, he'll kill me.
To avoid our enemy's attack
We'll lead the offensive in advance!

They don't have unity of clans—
The blessed land of Kyrgyzstan
Will turn into Chinese again!
There are a lot of riches there
From which we'll take all we can take—
Young women, pretty as the moon,
And all of their innocent girls;
We'll steal their herds and all their cattle;
And every warrior will take
A slave-burut for himself!"
Said Konurbai and gave the order
To start the campaign to Talas!

And as a many thousands of hordes
The Chinese army went to war—
To kill and rob, invade their land.
Passing a thorny, lengthy way,
Khan Konurbai came with his troops
To the valley of rivers Talas, Ken-Kol
And laid siege to Kyrgyz khan's court,
Offering surrender without fight.

Khan Semetey replied to him:
“Today we have our Kadyr-Tun—
The holy night for us, the Muslims,
So, all the Kyrgyz will not sleep
Pray until morning by the fire.
And you, honorable Konurbai,
I will receive in early morning.
To honor consent of both parties
We will arrange a special feast.
Peace be with you; I wish you well!”
Such answer gave Khan Semetey,
Approving the letter with a seal.

To soldiers he sent plenty arak,
Kymyz, kazy, and beshbarmak.
The warriors, tired on the road,
Ate all that meat, and then got drunk
From all the booze and the kymyz;
After putting up their camping tents
All of them went off to rest.

A dark night came, the moon had risen.
On mountain slopes the fires were lit.
Just peace and quiet all around…
Abruptly, right out of the blue,
A loud whistle went through the mountains,
And burning fire balls rolled down
The mountain slopes into the camps.
The grazing horses down below—
Into the mountains they took off!
The soldiers woke, without their horses,
Disconcerted by glows of lights.
They were put down by the blows
Of smashing blades and firing bows.

Piles of bodies gathered up,
Under a hail of deadly arrows.
Such chaos, cries, the moans of wounded—
It was hell that came to life,
And so, it lasted to the morning.

Until the light of dawn broke through
One could not hold back woeful tears
Seeing the carnage that took place.
The camp was burned down to the ground,
The human blood formed chilling pools,
And everywhere one laid their eyes
They saw dead bodies lying around.

And those who were still alive
Gathered around Khan Konurbai.
They shook in horror, anticipating
The impending fate they were about to face.
When Semetey arrived to the site,
Konurbai stepped forward to him.
He kneeled to him submissively,
And offered to the khan his sword:
“Khan Semetey, you’re victorious!
Kill me with my own sword!
I only beg for the release
Of people who remained alive!
Khans fight, but the simple people
We send to death just like cattle.
In life, the winner is the one,
Who robs, or kills! Now it’s your turn!”
Said the defeated Khan Konur.

And Semetey said in response:
“An easy death want for yourself?
You are my foe, so no forgiveness!
I want to kill you not at prayer,

Not in the garden, secretly,
As you did vanquish Khan Manas,
Hiding in bushes, cowardly—
In honest battle I'll kill you!
So take your sword and Algara,
Either I'll kill you, or you'll kill me!"

And two batyrs, drawing their swords,
Prompted their horses, spurring them,
Charged at each other with their roars.
Sparks flew off the damask swords,
No one of two thought giving in.
Both Taiburul and Algara
As frantic foes chewed at their bits,
In battle hit each other's chest.
And now Semetey succeeded
To hit Konurbai in the helmet.

The old man couldn't stand the blow,
The blood from his nose began to flow.
Algara, feeling the trouble,
Raced to the mountains with his rider.
But Semetey with his arrow
Reached the tulpar in the shoulder,
Fell to his knees, Algara.
Semetey lifted his sword—
With a single hit he beheaded Konur!

The people exulted with delight.
Khan Semetey then raised his sword,
Turned to his people and exclaimed:
"My friends and brothers! Dear people!
I have fulfilled my filial duty!
Revenged for death of our batyrs!
I have restored our Kyrgyz honor!
The one who came to us with a sword,

Died from that sword here himself!
Such wisdom was to us endowed
Before his death by prophet Isa!
And those who managed to stay alive,
I do release you— go back home!
Those who prefer to stay behind
Will live here as my own brother!”
Said to his people, Khan Semetey.
A victorious toi thundered to that.

Semetey defeats Konurbai

THE TALE OF HOW UMETEI STARTED WAR ON SEMETEY

The Kazakh batyr Umetei,
The ruler of mountains and steppes,
Was told that neighbour Semetey
Crushed the Chinese troops in Talas.
He killed Khan Konurbai in battle
And big kuna he did receive.
The Kazakh khan festered in offense:
“My father, the great hero Kokcho,
Was the right shoulder to the Kyrgyz;
In battles he was next to Manas,
Led Kazakh troops on their big march
To fateful battles into China—
He died with all the other batyrs.

The widows, orphans, and old men,
They still live here in their mourning,
But kuna for their fallen heroes
Did not receive any, Kazakh.
And everything the Chinese paid,
Appropriated, Semetey!
Not a single coin was shared with me!
He strengthened all of his possessions,
Armed every warrior he had,
And even in victorious toi
He didn’t call us as his guests!
My brother Semetey turned vain,
Boasting with strength and no respect.
I’ll nip this arrogance from him,
Remind them who’s important here!

I'll take kuna for father’s death.
I will force him to share with me!
We'll get a herd of a thousand heads—
I will demand his Taiburul!
And if he dares to refuse,
I will attack and take all power
So he will pay us twice as more!”

Umetei’s mother Akerkech
Tried easing anger from her son:
“Our connection to the Kyrgyz people
Is old as time itself, my son.
Our sons married the Kyrgyz girls,
Our daughters married Kyrgyz men.
You, Semetey, and Gulchoro
Are the three sons from three sisters.
Me, Kanykei, and Aruuke—
All three turned widows together
And raised three orphans as well.
I beg of you, my dear son,
Don’t be so envious and angry—
Be friendly to your bosom brother!
But if you start a fight with him,
You will not stay alive for long!”

But to his mother's appeals
Stubborn Umetei did not heed.
Gathered his soldiers, ordered them—
Start a campaign on Talas.
Crossing the steppes of Sar-Arka,
He reached the city of Merke.
He sent messengers to Talas,
A letter threatening the Kyrgyz.

Thirty-year-old Semetey
Along these years had seen a lot—
Deceit, treachery, and anger;
But out of envy, as a foe,
A brother starting war on brother—
That was a first that he'd been shown.
He called his old friend Gulchoro,
And gave him a strict and clear order:
“Take the squad of men Kyrk Choro,
Go out to meet our angry brother.
Convey my greetings to the khan
And let him know that I am ready—
Give my support, shoulder to shoulder;
I honor him as my own brother.

Convince him not to heed to gossips
For the deaths of batyrs and fathers
No one has paid us that kun.
I took revenge on Konurbai
And the Chinese paid with his life.
But if my brother Umetei
Is more inclined for the fight
I’ll see his war, make sure of that!”

By dawn came to the Merke city,
And with a squad, messenger Gulchoro,
Was called by Umetei to his yurt.
“I wish you health, Khan Umetei!
With me sends his warmest greetings
Your elder brother Semetey!
He asks your visit as a guest
To see our city ken Talas!
He offers you like in the old days
How once did Khans Kokcho, Manas
Unite our nations in brotherhood
Into one single khaganate

For all our foes to fear the name!
“Enough!” shouted Khan Umetei.
“Your empty words, you cunning fox,
Will not fill my brain at all!
The guilty one is not Konur!
When your Manas, a single khan,
Became so vain, decided all
His khan’s power would delegate
To the fugitive Almanbet;
Your father, that sly Chinese,
In turn he did oppress batyrs:
Spread lies, defame, slander them all!

Five khans, with them was my late father,
They meant to curb that Almanbet,
Voted to set up Kurultai.
Your father was slick, very wily,
The Kyrgyz troops he drove to China—
All the batyrs laid down their heads,
And Almanbet was killed himself!”

Gulchoro lost his self-restraint—
He bared his sword, and in his anger
Slashed the khan’s head from his shoulders.
When he came out of khan’s yurt
Holding a bloody sword in hand,
The guards ran in without their khan.
“Don’t be afraid! I won’t touch you!”
Said to the batyrs, Gulchoro,
“Kazakh batyrs! You are my brothers!

We all must live in unity.
If driven by senseless anger
We’ll start a war with one another
Neither you, nor we, the Kyrgyz,
Could win— we would but perish both!”

Told the Kazakhs, Gulchoro,
With every word agreed by them.

When Kanykei was told of this—
That the offended Gulchoro
Had killed his brother on that trip,
She couldn't stop the bitter tears.
“Cain, Adam’s eldest son,
Turned green with envy, lost control
His younger brother, Abel, murdered!
And here we have our Cain himself,
Finished by a younger Abel!
Will great Allah forgive this sin,
Koke-Tengir up in the heavens?”
Said Kanykei in fearful tears.

She ordered her son beg for pardon
And send her sister a big kuna—
A thousand horses for her loss,
Give Taiburul into her hands.
To Sar-Arka steppes from Ken Talas,
The herd of over two thousand horses
Headed by khan’s own Taiburul
Drove Semetey as a big kuna.
He asked forgiveness from the sister,
And honored for forty days after death.

HANCHORO'S BETRAYAL

The generous soul Semetey
Was unfamiliar with the fact
That his first wife was long unfaithful,
Unaware that his own friend
The devious, sneaky Hanchoro
Came secretly to Chachykei.
It does make sense, when people say
That the most dangerous fire's
Are the ones that start from within;
The most merciless, ingenious foe
Is one who comes out from your own.

So Hanchoro did not disguise
His deeply hurt, offended feelings,
But revealed them all to Chachykei.
To his jene he told as well,
How it was time to seize the power
From Semetey and Gulchoro.
He did recall, how Bukhara
Had married his brother Gulchoro,
But he, Hanchoro, was left single,
Although, he'd always been with him.
"When Khan Toltoi was killed in battle,
His horse we got as a reward—
Batyr's true horse Surkoen.

Chylbyr from that trophy horse
He didn't give me, but his brother!
When Umetei came with his campaign,
He sent Gulchoro to greet,
And with him mediate a peace,
But he, offended for his father,
Cut off the head of Kazakh khan!

Committed fratricide, he did!
For that misstep, Khan Semetey
Paid the price of two thousand horses,
And for the batyr's death he gave
His favorite horse, his Taiburul!
Such a blow caused brother Gulchoro—
To his own people, to his khan!
No wonder that our people say:
'Ken-Kol is not less than Talas,
Chubak is braver than Manas."

My father, brave batyr Chubak,
From youth he served his Khan Manas
To mortal and victorious battles—
Not once he led batyrs behind him,
Defending the honor of his Khan
At the Chinese walls he died a hero!
The father of Chinese Gulchoro—
The sneaky traitor Almanbet—
Drove the Kyrgyz troops to China
And ruined all of our batyrs!
My father is batyr Chubak,
Not once did he warn Khan Manas
That Almanbet was our foe!
But no, he idolized the prick,"
Grumbled the jealous Hanchoro.

With her own bitter, unjust fate,
Shared with him these woes, Chachykei.
Resentment, jealousy, and envy
Caused her an awful pain as well.
"Ever since Aichurok appeared,
He only sees and talks to her.
Into my white yurt as before
No visit pays khan Semetey.
And she's the one commanding me,

Like I was tokol, she's baibiche—
The whole Khanate is being managed
By her, and your friend Gulchoro.
When our husband leaves Talas
This shameless woman lays with him.
I am afraid that these two scoundrels
Will poison khan or murder him,
And take the power for themselves,"
Whispered in tears, Chachykei.

"And for that very purpose, jene,
We must take over, you and I.
We will not kill: neither of us
Will be able to raise a hand!
That task someone will do for us—
A nemesis, a relentless foe.
When Chyngojo was killed in battle,
And lost his head with khan Toltoi,
His younger brother Kyaz swore,
At any cost, when he grows up
He'd take revenge on Semetey.
He's now mature and very strong,
He is the khan of Jedigers.
But with the war to come in here,
Kyaz lacks troops and needs some help.
With him, we'll find common agreement,
To catch Semetey in a trap,
And then khan's throne will be all ours!"
Said the treacherous Hanchoro.
The two of them conspired that night;
In foul passion they made love…

When spring time came into the highlands,
All the nomad Kyrgyz tribes
Drove sheep and cattle from the valleys
Into green pastures of jailoo.

And in the mountains full with grass
The river flowed life-giving milk,
Fizzled kymyz in kookor,
The celebrations, toi, and wakes—
So Semetey with kyrk choro
From dawn till evening were guests at feasts!

Said to batyrs Hanchoro:
“When everyone is at jailoo
Our foes might plan a big intrusion.
For the prevention of attacks
I will inspect our border posts!
Please send me out on patrol,”
Asked the khan, Hanchoro,
Who thus affirmed in his reply.

Gulchoro then gave his Surkoen
To Hanchoro to scout the borders.
Together with an honest horseman,
Hanchoro passed Oliata and Merke,
The steppes, the mountain drops,
And through the woods of Aaxaul,
The rivers Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya,
And finally, he had arrived
To the lands of clan Jediger.

Khan Kyaz paid all attention
To the words of the traitor Hanchoro.
“In my own clan the rules are such:
We gain our wealth with honest labor,
Raise our children, milk and plow,
Protect our native land and people
From attacks of foreigners.
And if our foes dare to come,
We will show them what it is to fight!
Taking revenge on Semetey,

With war to go to Ken Talas,
Such thoughts never occured to me!”
Admitted to his guest, Khan Kyaz.

“Your elder brother, Khan Toltoi,
Not once insulted Semetey.
He severed him from Chachykei;
In Bukhara he married her.
Then Ai-Churok he took as well,
Killing Toltoi and Chyngojo.
And you did not take your revenge!
Your duty— defend your brother's honor,
Take the kuna for fallen batyrs!
Make Aichurok your own wife!
You are the ruler of these clans!
You are a Khan of these here lands!
You were the chosen one by fate!
Your dignity and rare honor
You must restore and keep above!”
Hanchoro shamed the Khan Kyaz.

They did agree that on the first day,
When the new moon would change from old,
Hiding in darkness of the night,
Kyaz with troops would come to Talas,
To the burial place of Khan Manas.

“When Semetey comes to mazar,
In the mausoleum he will pray.
He’ll be unarmed, easy to kill,
And then, the throne is ours to take!
Aichurok will be yours to steal!
I’ll make my wife of Chachykei,”
To khan Kyaz said Hanchoro.
Returned back home then, Hanchoro,
Gave his report to Semetey.

He checked all borders thoroughly.
“There’s peace and quiet all around,
No sight of enemy invasion,
Sleep quietly and without worries
And lead your life leisurely.
The only thing that caused dismay.
On our way back from the trip
We made a stop at a Kumboz
Where Khan Manas rests in peace,
To read our predawn namaz—
Tears rolled out from our own eyes!

It looks like enemies have tried
To wipe Kumboz from the face of the Earth:
The bricks were taken down from it,
The roof demolished on the top!
When I went to the mausoleum,
I saw the skies from the inside—
A strange voice I heard in there
As if it was our Khan Manas
Calling for your help, Semetey.
I, my Khan, could not hold back—
I begged his pardon and just wept!”
The vile Hanchoro pretended well.

DEATH OF SEMETEY

This story moved Khan Semetey—
The horses to saddle he ordered
To find a white mare for the task
Of sacrifice and saying prayers.
He gathered mason masters quick
To resurrect the mausoleum.

That early morning, Semetey
Ordered to saddle his new horse.
Aichurok ran out of the yurt:
“My Khan, please do not leave me!
I had the most horrid of dreams.
Our enemies surrounded the house,
A fire was burning from within,
And you with your friend Gulchoro
Were trapped alone inside the yurt.
That brainless Chachykei laughed on—
She had the khan’s crown on her head!
And therefore, I beg of you,
Please take your sword and ak-olpok—
Your armor should be there with you!”
In tears was perceptive Aichurok.

“Your dream, my love, is only fear
That women feel when they’re with child.
There's peace and quiet in the mountains—
Traveled all over, Hanchoro,
Scrutinizing all of our borders
He saw no enemies around.
We'll stay at ease, just sleep and walk,
Lie in your arms all day I want,
Caressing your warm, smooth belly
Where our baby is growing now,”

Jokingly he told his wife,
The careless Khan Semetey.

And taking neither sword nor ak-olpok,
Semetey took to the road.
When they arrived to that very place,
Seeing the crumbling kumboz,
Batyrs could not refrain from tears.
They read a prayer for Manas' soul,
Sacrificed the white mare,
And started a fire under kazan.
Asked for forgiveness, Semetey,
And he went inside the mausoleum.
He fell to his knees, losing his strength
And like a child the khan then wept:
"Forgive me, father, I could not
Save your kumboz from enemies!

I tried, I did with all my best
Do everything that you did ask!
All over scattered Kyrgyz clans,
I reassembled and united.
I took revenge for your own death.
Created a single Khaganate.
Your legacy and every will,
Until my death I will fulfil."

And suddenly he thought he heard
His late father speaks to him:
"With valor, strength, and with your sword,
Before your people and your father,
You have fulfilled your filial duty!
Our people and all our descendants—
I will protect in spirit, soul.
I bless the Kyrgyz nations for
Their feats of arms and honest labor!

I'll be your strength and your support!"
Thus, was spoken from the heavens,
To his descendants Khan Manas.
And in this gracious, blessed moment,
There was a frantic chant outside.
The cries, "Toltoi! Toltoi! Toltoi!"
Kyaz with his combatant squad
Beat up all the khan's guards outside,
And turned out all of the kazans,
Smothered the fire under them.
He ordered to tie up Gulchoro,
Who was without a weapon
And couldn't show any resistance.

Kyaz and sneaky Hanchoro
Approached together to the kumboz.
"Hey, khan! Don't hide! Come out now!"
Shouted the two men in fury.
Aback came thunder from the heavens.
There was a snowfall mixed with rain,
Lightning flashed from in the mountains,
Clouds as black as night itself
Seethed in the darkest of the skies.

Only confusion and fear around!
In a moment everything died down.
The sun again shined like before.
Peace and quiet returned to the highlands.
Khan Kyaz and Hanchoro
With swords came into the mausoleum.
They did not find Semetey there—
Into the skies Semetey soared.

Since then and up to our days,
Semetey lives among the people.
Like a memory written on granite,

The people keep him in their souls.
For thousands of years, they've carried on
The bloodline Khan Manas bestowed—
In his grandson Seytek continues.
Now, how batyr Kyaz was killed,
And poor Ai-Churok survived,
And what of Bakai, Choro, and Kanykei—
About that will be our next tale.

СЕМЕТЕЙ
SEMETEI
SEMETEY

GLOSSARY

Abake- uncle.
Abalak - bat when playing in the Ordo.
Ajo - the leader, the head of the people.
ai - the moon, shine in the night.
aybalta - the ax.
Aikol - generous.
Aimak (Mong.) - A region.
Ayran - sour milk, kefir
ak - white, a symbol of purity.
Akim - the ruler.
ak-olpok - combat outerwear.
ak-orgo - a white yurt.
ak-kelte - the gun of Manas.
ak-shukkar - white falcon
ala-alas - a spell, a good wish
ala-kiyiz - unstitched felt.
alaman-baige - horse racing for the prize.
alas - fumigation with juniper smoke.
Alchiki - knee bone for games.
argymak (argamak) - horse.
asker - a warrior.
akiya -a joke.
ash - commemoration
ashpozchu - cook.
Aed (Greek) - narrator of the epos.
ayak - a bowl.
ayash - appeal to the spouse and spouse of a friend.
Baybiche - the older wife.
Bayge - a prize.
Bakan - a pole.
Balta - an ax.
Baltyrkan - a mountain plant.
Barymta - hijacking herd.

Batman - weight in four pounds.
Batyr - a warrior, a hero.
Beshbarmak - meat dish
Beshik - cradle.
Beshik-toy - a feast in honor of the newborn.
Bobo (tadj.) - grandfather.
Boz-Kise - a bag for flint.
Bozo - a fermented drink from millet.
Biykech - dancer, in a figurative sense - a girl.
Bichik (Kalmyts.) - the holy book.
Burdyuk - leather bag for milk.
Burut - this is how the Chinese and Kalmyks called the Kyrgyz.
Buudan is a mighty horse
Davger - master.
Dambylda - the priest.
Daria- a river.
Jena - an appeal to his older brother's wife.
Dobulbas - combat drum.
Doom -a requirement.
Dubana - a beggar.
Duldul - winged horse.
Jamba - a plate of silver or gold,
target for shooting.
Zhasol - Khan's servant.
Zhezde - the husband of the older sister.
Yellow - soldier.
Zhengey (Kazakh) - appeal to the wife of the elder brother.
Zhigit - a young man, a warrior, a servant.
Zholbors - tiger.
Jurt - the people.

Zamzam - the holy water of Mecca.
Zeket - cattle tax.
Zindan is a prison pit.

GLOSSARY

Aba – An uncle
Abake – A loving way to call an uncle
Abalak – A wooden bat used when playing Ordo.
Ach-Albars – an extremely sharp sword from folded steel
Ai – The moon, shining in the night.
Aibalta – An axe.
Ail – A village.
Aimak (Mongolian) – A settlement.
Ak – White; a symbol of purity.
Akim – The ruler.
Ak-kalpak – A woolen, felt white hat for Kyrgyz men.
Ak-Kelte – Manas' gun.
Ak-olpok – Battle wear.
Ak-orgo – A white yurt.
Aksakal – a respected elder.
Ala-kiyiz – Felt rug without any patterns.
Alaman – Races (usually horse races).
Alaman-baige – A prize given to winners of horse-racing.
Alas – Smoking with branch of fir tree (or sage) for spiritual blessing.
Ala-alas – Spell, blessing.
Alchiki – Bones of the knee joint for games of Ordo.
Amu Darya – Name of a river in Southern part of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan
Arak – vodka.
Argymak (argamak) – A race horse.
Ash – A ceremonial wake.
Ashar – "helping out"- a community helps certain individuals by sharing their livestock of building a dwelling for new families (ones in need).
Ashpozchu – A chef.
Ayash – Addressing to the spouse and the wife of the friend.
Ayran – Sour milk, yogurt.

Bai – A rich man.
Baibiche – The eldest wife.
Baige – Prize.
Bakan – Pole.

Balban-kurosh – Wrestling match
Balta – An axe.
Baltyrkan – A mountain plant.
Bashi – Ruler, chief.
Batman – A measurement of mass, approximately four pounds.
Batyr – A warrior, hero.
Beshbarmak – A traditional Kyrgyz dish from meat and square-cut noodles.
Beshment – A coat.
Biykech – A maiden, unmarried young lady.
Bichik (Kalmak) – A holy book.
Bobo (Tajik.) – The grandfather.
Boz-kise – A bag for the flint.
Bozo – A drink from whole millet.
Burut – The name which the Chinese and the Kal-myks used to refer to the Kyrgyz.
Burdyuk – A leather bag for milk or any liquid.
Buudan – A powerful horse.

Chanach – A leather bag for kymyz, the same as a wineskin.
Chapan – A robe; outerwear.
Choor – A flute.
Choro – A skilled warrior.
Choychek – A wooden cup.
Chylbyr – The leash for the horse.
Chynar – Tree

Dambylda – A clergyman.
Dambyldynyn ayaly– Wife of a clergyman
Darya – A river.
Dastorkon – A tablecloth.
Dobulbas – A battle drum.
Duldul – A winged horse.
Dun – Type of horse.
Dyikan – a farmer.

Eujigey – A dairy dish.

Elechek – A married women's headdress.
Er – Hero.
Er-Sayish – A sporting battle of horsemen and spears (like jousting).

Ghee – Butter
Ichigi – Light women's boots.
Ichik – A coat.
Iskender – Alexander the Great.
Jailoo – Highland pasture.
Jamby – A shooting game, when a bag hanging on a thin silk thread if full of silver or gold, a target for shooting.
Jasol – The servant of the khan.
Jeldet – A soldier.
Jene (or Dzhene) – A respectful way of calling the wife of an elder brother.
Jezde – The husband of the elder sister.
Jengei (Kazakh) – A respectful way of calling the wife of an elder brother.
Jigit – A young man, a warrior, a servant.
Jolbors – A tiger.
Juz –one hundred

Kakan - the Chinese ruler.
Kalcha- how the Kyrgyz called Kalmaks.
Kalym – A dowry given for a bride.
Kamchy – A leather whip on a wooden handle.
Kandagai – Sports trousers made of rawhide.
Kangai – Chinese
Kapyr – A non-Muslim; an infidel.
Kazan – A caulderon
Kelin – Young married woman.
Kelinchek – A young married woman.
Ken – wide
Kerege – The wooden walls of the yurt.
Kernei – A battle horn (woodwind musical instrument).
Khan – The ruler of the clan.
Khanate – A state, political entity, rules by a khan or kagan
Khanum – Khan's wife

Kindik ene – A midwife.
Kiyiz – woolen rug
Koshok – A wailing song about the departed, ex-pressing grief.
Koshokchu – A person (woman) who sings koshok.
Koz atar – A sharp shooter, a sniper. Literally, “the one who shoots in the eye.”
Kokui-Alat! – An interjection of despair. Literally, “Death came to take!”
Kun – A payment for the dead.
Kuresh – A wrestling fight.
Kurjun – A sack.
Kuroshchu – A wrestler.
Kymyz – Fermented mare’s milk
Kyz – A girl
Kyz-kuumai – “Catching up with the girl.” A sports game.

Maidan – A battlefield, ring.
Mankurt – “The one who lost memory.” Not remem-bering one's kinship; usually enslaved men turned into mankurt.
Mergenchi – A hunter.
Min – one thousand
Moldo – a cleargyman.
Moore – A seal (khan’s seal).

Nabob – a powerful person.
Namaz – Muslim praying ritual.
Nike - ritual of marriage.

On – Ten (on bashi – leader of ten).
Ooganistan – Present day Afganistan.
Ordo – A game that involves knocking out alchiks (bones from knee joints of animals) in a circle.
“Salam”. “Alik” – A greeting and an answer.
Sacred Khyzyr (Kydyr) – An Islamic saint who protects people from evil.
Sakas – Animal joint bones to play a game of Ordo.
Sarai – A palace.
Satrap – Governor.

Sekira – A hatchet, an axe.
Shaitan – The devil.
Sher – A lion.
Shyrdak – An embroidered carpet made from felt.
Sunnat – Rite of circumcision of boys.
Surnai – A flute, pipe (woodwind musical instrument).
Suusar – Marten.
Suyunchu – A reward for good news.
Syr-Naiza – A painted spear.

Tavak – A wooden plate.
Taigan – The Kyrgyz breed of dog
Talas – Region in Northern Kyrgyzstan
Tal-Choku – name of a place in Kyrgyzstan, toponym.
Tam-tam – A battle drum.
Tardyk – A leather rug.
Tebeitei – A round winter headdress.
Tenge – Money.
Tengri (KokoTenir) – God of blue skies. Ten-grism, also known as Tengriism or Tengrianism, is a Central Asian religion, characterized by shamanism, animism, totemism, poly- and monotheism, and ancestor worship.Tentek – a rowdy boy.
Terdyk – A small cover under the saddle.
Toguz korgool – A board game with a wooden plate and nine balls.
Toi – A celebration ceremony.
Tokol – The younger wife.
Toraga – An elected speaker.
Tule – A meal in honor of an event.
Tulpar – Fairy-tale horse.
Tyundyuk – Chimney of the yurt.
Ukuruk – A wooden stick with a loop to catch horse or cattle.
Zam-zam-holy water from Mecca.
Zeket - a tax on livestock.
Zindan - a prison pit.

Some traditions, beliefs in Kyrgyz, mentioned in the epos Kyrgyz people interpret dreams having a tiny dot under eye- a belief that a person who has a birthmark under eye might have some abilities of an “evil eye”, and could unwillingly cause harm to someone.

Seytek

THE TRAITOR HANCHORO USURPS THE KHAN'S POWER

The power hungry Hanchoro—
Traitor, lech, adulterer—
Achieved at last his wicked goal:
At the cost of blood and deaths
He did declare himself a khan.
All who dared oppose his ways
He shamed, disgraced, banished, killed.
His aim— the name of Semetey
From all people's memory erase.

He ordered the Kyrgyz khaganate
To use his name in any matter
As khaganate of Hanchoro.
In valley rivers Ken-Kol, Talas,
The people he called to Kurultai,
Delivered them his angry speech:
"We did achieve our goal—
Defeated dictator Semetey!
And now no one will lead you
The Kyrgyz troops to disastrous war!
Let them live on in their own lands
The Manchu, Chinese and Kalmak—
Each one with their own native state!

From now on, our entire nation
Will lead a quiet life and heal.
But if the enemy comes here,
They will not leave this land alive!
We have strong allies and true friends—
Clan Jedigers, and Khan Kyaz!
But all we took into our hands:
Jailoo, the valleys and the herds
The wealth, our treasury's dear gold

We will lose instantly, so quick
If Gulchoro, Semetey's brother,
Stays alive and unpunished.
Therefore, I have commanded
To find him, bring for questioning
And publicly here execute!
And same goes for that sage Bakai.
Imperative to kill the old man,
And yes, it's a pity that no one
Will raise his sword for that task!"

"My khan!"- spoke loudly Er Kyaz.
"I do respect you very much.
You're a bosom brother of Gulchoro!
The people say, Semetey's mother
Breastfed the three of you as one—
You never should forget that grace!
Be kinder, please, my dearest khan
Forget old grievances for now,
Find your heart, forgive your brother!"

"My dear Kyaz! And here you're wrong;
You do not know our history,
And what I want to say to you,
You simply might not know at all.
I was not liked by Semetey,
For telling the truth without fear.
Gulchoro our friend and brother
Tiptoed in front of him and flattered,
Spread around such lies and slandered.
His father, the Khan Almanbet,
Came running from China to us,
At first, he went to Sary-Arka,
To serve the glorious Kokcho,
While father Aidarkhan was ruler.
He gained his trust, gave him advice,

Humiliated Kazakh khans.
When Khan Kokcho was not around,
Alma spent nights with his wife.
Discovering this, Khan Kokcho,
Got mad with jealousy and anger
And banished Almanbet forever!
So he came to our Khan Manas
As a quiet louse he crawled in
And surely gained khan's confidence.

On tribute wake in Karkyra
He cheated guests in our horse races,
The memorial ash for Kokotey
Ended in bloody mass slaughter.
Six khans from each Kyrgyz clan
Sent their ambassadors to Manas
To talk to our gullible khan
To curb his friend, limit his power.
But clever was that Almanbet,
He gave advice to Khan Manas:
Gather all khans with their armies
And start a big campaign on China.

Wide-eyed Manas did not suspect
That his Chinese friend Almanbet
Intended revenge on Konurbai:
By Khan Manas' iron hand
He'd restore his tarnished honor!
On the road for forty days
No rest he gave for all the troops,
Those who got ill or lagged behind
He executed on the spot!
The Kyrgyz troops took Chet-Beijing,
That's where all the batyrs were killed.
Manas, himself, was wounded then,
To home, Talas, returned alone!

When they passed the Chinese wall,
One from the squad noticed behind
A single horse had followed them.
The bridle of his battle horse
Was carrying dead Almanbet
As if the Chinese land itself
Even his dust did not accept—
For leading troops of a different country
Onto his own people, land,
For ruining so many lives!
Even if Mighty God forgave him,
The fate would not forgive the Kyrgyz,
The descendants will thirst for revenge!

I was told all of this so young
By the head of squad Kyrgyl-chal.
When we arrived into Kashgar,
Me, Gulchoro, and old Bakai,
The Jediger's Khan Chyngojo
Told us that sneaky Almanbet
Had ruined Kyrgyz in that battle,
And that's the reason he will not
Be ally with that Gulchoro!
Gulchoro became so furious,
With his kamchy struck him in the head!

Jediger's Khan Chyngojo,
As an enemy started the war.
Both Gulchoro and Semetey
And Kazakh Khan Umetei—
Three brothers from three sisters.
When younger brother Umetei
For death of father khan Kokcho
Asked them for a share of kun,
Gulchoro came with a visit
And killed Umetei in his own yurt.

And if he returns back here
He won’t spare anyone their hurt.
Do not forget, inside of him
An alien foe’s blood boils.
We have to kill him, no doubt of that!”
In anger Hanchoro said.

Kyaz did not object to him.
No soul from the crowd said a word.
One only heard in the mountains
How foamed and flowed river Talas.
And here again, in Kyrgyz lands—
The struggle for power, fear, chaos.

UNDER HANCHORO'S POWER

The power hungry Hanchoro
Sent orders to the khaganate—
Turn Earth, the mountains upside down,
Find Gulchoro wherever he hides,
Tie him, and bring him to the khan's court.
In empty steppes they found him there,
Surrounding him into a ring,
Jigits tried to capture him alive.
But brave Gulchoro didn't wince,
Just in a moment he beheaded
The four pursuers attacking him.
Kyaz himself rushed to the fight;
He planned to hit him with a spear
But Gulchoro's sword was very sharp,
And with spear he cut him in two.
Their forces were not equal now—

The wounded, tied-up Gulchoro
Was brought into the khan's quarters.
And Hanchoro himself gave order:
"Leave this fugitive alive!
Into his shoulder blades drive nails!
And throw him in the shed with cattle!
There he'll die slow, beat, and frail.

When Chachykei came to find
That Hanchoro usurped the power,
The joyful woman lost her mind.
She never even dared to think
That God would bring such happiness!
When suddenly a brother dies,
His widow and all of his orphans
One of his brothers takes in—

Such is the people's Shari'ah.
Now it's certain for Chachykei:
Semetey's brother Hanchoro
Will marry her by every right.
No one can blame her or gossip
That Hanchoro is an adulterer;
No need to hide for them at night
And meet up secretly each time.
The people won't call her a widow—
From now on, Chachykei
Will be a lawful khan's nike!

Thus, exactly ten days later
Called the happy Hanchoro
The priests, the relatives and friends.
The Kyrgyz khan with Chachykei,
Kneeled before all of the people-
Drank the sacred glacial water-
Married by a proper nike.

From the yurt came out in mourning scarf
To congratulate the new royal couple
With a bow, beautiful Churok.
Just like a white swan, she was tender,
Slim like a mountain gazelle;
Tengir himself created her
To enjoy happiness and love.
Jediger's khan er Kyaz
Admitted that he'd never seen
One of such celestial beauty—
That passion overwhelmed Kyaz.
He fell in love with Aichurok.
"I'll gladly give my life and honor
To touch, caress her next to me."

As he barely finished his thought,
That new khan, clever Hanchoro,
Pushed by the shoulder Khan Kyaz.
“Well, what do you think of my jene?
The face so beautiful and young?
Yes, it is a pity she’s a widow,”
Sarcastically said Khan Hanchoro.
“To this amazing, lovely widow,
In every dream, and in real life
Ready to pray now and forever,”
Khan Kyaz answered to his friend.

“I see, my dear Khan Jediger,
You fell in love with her already.
Well then, my friend, believe my word
That Aichurok will be your wife!
You cannot lose such pretty prey
Especially if she fell into you!
I, myself wanted her too—
But jealous is my Chachykei,
She’ll never get along with her.
You’re so lucky, my friend, Kyaz!”
Admitted Hanchoro and laughed.

KYAZ ASKS AICHUROK'S HAND IN MARRIAGE

Without wasting time, Hanchoro,
Raised the spirits of Khan Kyaz—
To the unhappy widow Aichurok
Sent three old women, the matchmakers.
"You cannot sit alone, Churok,
So long in gloomy, mourning scarf
Leading a life of a childless widow.
Let jene know my khan's command-
She has to wed Khan Kyaz!"
Ordered the khan's matchmaking women.

"How could I be with another
When I already wed Semetey
And never parted with him in life?
My husband yet to rest in grave—
He will return to me alive!
Your Hanchoro and Khan Kyaz
Are murderers that killed my husband!
And you tell me in all this light
To marry one who killed my love?"
Sobbed bitterly Aichurok.

The three old women all in row
Started to beg her, steer her fro:
"Wise people say in our Kyrgyz:
'One who comes with a guilty head
Turns out to be your father's killer—
Forgive him, give your mother's hand
And he will care for you and love
Much stronger than his own blood.'
"Be prudent, dear Aichurok!
Accept your cruel, cold-hearted fate!

Kyaz khan seems a good jigit,
He won't offend you in any way."

"In the worst case, Khan Hanchoro,
Will not protect your empty yurt;
His lustful friends each one by one
Will thus torment your vacant bed."
"Our khan will banish you with shame
To your native city, Herat,
Or out of jealousy and greed
That Chachykei will kill you here."
The three old women spoke their minds.

Seeing the guests off with a bow,
The widow took her hidden dagger,
Tightened the grip to make sure
Her heart would meet the dagger's head.
And then she heard how deep inside
Two hearts were knocking at odd times.
"Oh, Semetey! My dear beloved!
Your child's heart is beating strong!
I swear, this child I will protect
Save him at any cost, I promise!"
Sobbed beautiful Aichurok.
To kill the two lives at once,
Her hand was not quite firm enough.

There came the sun, so bright and clear
On top of heavenly white mountains.
In early morning heard Aichurok,
A loud talk outside her yurt.
"Right here we'll read a prayer
In memory of late Semetey,
And then Kyaz will go inside—
He'll talk alone to the widow
To offer her to be his wife.

If she dares refuse proposal,
Tie her by hands and the feet;
He can take her to his khanate,
He'll marry her in his own home!"
Hanchoro ordered them.

When Khan Kyaz came to Aichurok,
She rose to meet him with a bow,
With mourning scarf around her head.
"My khan, I ask, why would you need
A pained widow, a dead man's wife?
Hard to believe you cannot find
A good-looking young girl for a spouse?"
With a plea of hope she said to him.

"Oh, Aichurok! Forgive me, please!
I'm ready to fall at your feet,
Forever pray to high heavens,
Koke-Tengir himself I ask
To keep and guard you all the time!
And I, for you, my dear Churok
Will give my life and my own fate!
As for your husband Semetey—
I swear to you, I did not kill!
By the stupid trust I tend to have,
I fell into the open trap.
For thoughtless sin I did commit
I will repent all my life.
You can't forgive, I understand;
I give you, Aichurok, my sword—
You can cut off my head right now!"
Said desperately Khan Kyaz.

"Between us, khan, there is a gate
You cannot open, cannot cross!
My dear husband Semetey's

Own child grows inside of me.
I swear before Koke-Tengir:
Let me a poor widow be.
I'm willing to sacrifice myself
For this child in me to live!"
Said Aichurok with tearful eyes.

"Churok, I am a lonely man,
I have a khanate and my own people,
But God did not give me a progeny.
I did defend my own clans
And bloody battles I did win.
As a sign of peace, I took as wife
Janai's daughter, Jainake.
And then the beauty Karakoz
Became my true and loving wife.
I am twice married, but— alas!
Unfortunately, neither wife
Gave to me a single child.
The prophet told me in a dream,
A child of my own blood, to me
Our Creator will never give.

Why do I need this wealth and power
If no offsprings will come from me?
Who will train my birds of prey?
Feed them, give water, take to hunt?
Who will take aibalta and spear?
For the clans and stand as a wall?
Please know, Churok, your child inside
Will be dear to me as my own!

I'll be so happy at that moment,
When I can see a newborn son
Smiling and suckling on your breast
As if herself came to my house

The Holy mother— Umai-ene!
Upon my honor, Aichurek,
I swear your child will never know
That I am not his real father.
Upon his birth I will arrange
An unrivaled toi to celebrate!
Respected guests I'll call to come
And I myself will give him a name!
The child will grow as cherished, loved,
The most desired and wanted one!"

Such promise gave her, Khan Kyaz,
And on the knees of Aichurok,
Tears fell down from the khan's eyes.
That very same night through Alai
To far and distant land Kashgar
Where lived all clans Jediger,
The Kyrgyz nation in the east,
Khan Kyaz took his new bride.
He was so pleased with his wife—
So dutiful, so exquisite.
But Aichurok was very keen;
Always so pleasing and so kind.

She gave her husband every night
Sleeping pills in his kymyz,
Enchanted him with much affection
Put him to bed and after that
A maid resembling herself
She let into the bedroom and left.

THE BIRTH OF SEYTEK

Only six months had passed since
Aichurok and Khan Kyaz
By the agreement both decided
Became a husband and a wife.
And now that hour had arrived
When anxious worried Khan Kyaz
Called in the old women kindik-ene
To assist his wife in giving birth.
The old women felt her belly,
Whispered so quietly between—
They were afraid that Aichurok
Had a dead fetus in her womb.
The birthing started premature;
The child was coming before his term.
Nevertheless, all ended well
With natural pains and suffering.
Thank God the son was born so healthy
Strong and big for one so young.

The people spread their gossip soon:
“Didn’t infertile Khan Kyaz
Bring Semetey’s son from far Talas
Within the womb of his last tokol?”
On and on they tattled and talked.
On the seventh day the Khan Kyaz
Called all guests for beshik-toi.
“My friends and brothers! My dear people!
At last, I’m happy beyond belief.
A son is born— my rightful heir!
My beautiful wife Aichurok
Is the one who gave me this great joy.
I heard the rumor spread about
That he was born before his term;

No worries there— my son is strong!
Do not forget, my dearest friends,
From both of his natural parents
He's born with khan's blood in his veins.
So down with gossip and the rumors,
The one who spreads them I can say
Will lose his head— my word of khan!"
Khan Kyaz said angrily.
"And now I ask of you my friends
To find a fitting name for him,"
Khan Kyaz asked with a grin.

So everyone began to think—
What was the right name for the child?
None of the wise men thought of one
That was fit for khan's newborn son.
And suddenly came to this toi
A stranger with a beggar's cane
And gave the boy the name "Seytek."
"Let letters of this name forever
Last and live among your people,
From time to time, it will go on!"
Such wishes made the wanderer.

Shouting "Alas!" three times in a row
The strange dubana was gone from sight.

SEYTEK'S CHILDHOOD

His khan's word kept well, Er Kyaz:
He carried the child on his neck
Often indulged him, caressed with love,
And kissed him as if his own son.
And when Seytek grew up a bit
Kyaz taught him to ride a horse,
Stab with a spear and fight with swords
And how to defend himself with a shield.

Aichurok was very pleased
With the self-reliant son she had.
She waited counting every day
When he would gain maturity;
She would tell him all about
His grandfather, Batyr Manas;
Of native lands, the Ken Talas;
Of his real father, Semetey;
And how in suffering and pain
Live the sages Bakai and Gulchoro
And his grandma Kanykei.

That treacherous one Hanchoro
By evil plans and betrayal
Killed his father and took the throne.
And of the fact her son Seytek
Was obliged to fulfill his sacred duty:
He must return to Ken Talas
Restore the crumbling khaganate
So common people could again
Live unified and peacefully.
In secret, not telling Kyaz,
She sent a letter to Talas.
For many years there Gulchoro

Suffered and withered with no hope.
In this letter Aichurok reported
The truth about her son Seytek
And his real father, Semetey.
She did request that Gulchoro
Tend to himself and gain his strength
As soon as her son would mature
He'd have to visit the Jedigers
And have a talk with young Seytek.

SEYTEK MEETS GULCHORO

In highlands withered Gulchoro,
Lived in a cave all by his own
And guarded there the khan's herds.
He starved and suffered from his wounds,
Lost hope and had the lowest spirits—
With every day he slowly died.
When the news finally reached him
In the far khanate of Jediger
That great Khan Manas's offspring lived,
Took heart the wounded Gulchoro.
He quickly there decided to train
And restore their unity and honor.

He prayed to the heavens asking them
For young Seytek to grow up fast.
He took sword and shield into his hands,
Waited for long Gulchoro
For the day when finally, Seytek
Turned thirteen years and stood up tall.
Fighting his pain from the wounds
He came to the yurt on limping foot
Where Karagul the herdsman lived-
The head of all the khan's shepherds
To ask if he deserved break.
"I do resemble a plucked hawk—
No clothes. no shoes, almost naked,
I feel I have little to live.

Such a poor slave you'd be ashamed
Even to bury in a grave.
I want to go to valley Talas
And ask for clothes from Kanykei.
I don't have strength to walk down there—
Will you give me a horse Karagul?"
Gulchoro asked the chief of shepherds.

"You've got a point my hapless slave!
You moved me into tears friend!
After all it's been a while since
You've had real social call.
I'll give you five days in a row
To see Kanykei in Talas.
And take my horse, Bozbaital;
Come back in time and don't be late!"
Said Karagul in a threatening tone.
Gulchoro was beyond happy,
Jumped on the saddled horse at once,
Rushed towards lands of Jediger
Arrived in khan's court in no time.

Kyaz, seeing old Gulchoro,
Was up in arms, so furious.
"Tie him at once!" was his command.
"This slave dared to crawl in here!
Cut off his head! Throw him to the dogs!"

But then Aichurok ran in to beg:
"I come with a confession, Gulchoro.
My Khan, please have mercy on him!
Recall the fable our people say
Of a man who comes with admitted guilt—
Even if it's your enemy,
Your father's killer, you forgive.

My son you know, dear Khan Kyaz,
Within womb he did forgive.
My khan, this time it is your turn!"
Said to her husband, Aichurok.

Khan Kyaz resolved his anger,
Released the choro, let him be.
Churok called in her trusted maids
And ordered them to wash the guest,
Give change of clothes and tend to him,
With herbal remedies heal his wounds.

She called her son into the yurt.
When Gulchoro saw young Seytek,
He couldn't hold back tears of joy—
He felt he saw right there alive
His friend and brother Semetey.
The same posture, about the same height,
Stout power in both shoulders,
The same smile, same look of a leader.
"My dear brother Semetey!
Do I see you alive again?"
Cried happy, old Gulchoro,
Embracing young Seytek to heart.

Like a little child, sincere, he sobbed:
"By you, I do believe, Seytek,
Defeated will be Hanchoro.
We'll overthrow him from the throne,
Along with his treacherous throes.
To our native lands' returns
Unity, honor, equality!
And our people will forever
Plow and sow on native land
The promised land that is so precious
By fate and God given to us.

United by an honest Khan
Who will protect his own clans!”

From Gulchoro learned Seytek
Of his grandfather, Batyr Manas;
Of his birthplace, the Ken Talas;
That Hanchoro and Khan Kyaz
Murdered his father, usurped the power.
He learned that those on his own land
Were held captive in poverty;
On the smallest portions of bread and water
Lived his grandmother Kanykei
And Chyirdy, a great grandmother,
And that old, wise sage Bakai
Lived in exile as a slave,
Tending khan’s cattle and camels.

Seytek was angry with his mother—
He blamed her for hiding the truth.
So many years she lied to him
And lived as an obedient wife
With father’s killer all this time.
She left behind their dear elders,
Defenseless people, all alone.

“Oh no, my son! You are so wrong!
I’m chaste and pure before your father!
Every evening to Khan Kyaz
I give kymyz mixed with herbs,
A maid who looks somewhat like me
Then goes to his bed every night.
The infertile Khan Kyaz knows
You are not his own son,”
Said to Seytek, Aichurok.

“My natural father murdered he!
And now, I’ll murder him myself!”
In rage and madness screamed Seytek.

“Hold on, my son! Don’t be so hasty!
He did not wrong you, dear son!
I used the judgment of a mother,
Or both of us would have been dead!
You would have been killed by Hanchoro
Fearing that you, Semetey’s son,
Would soon grow up and finish him.
That jealous old bitch Chachykei
Would find a way to see my end.
I’ve kept in secret, dearest son,
Manas’s armor ak-olpok,
Manas’s spear syr-naiza.”
Unlocked the chest then, Aichurok
Passed to batyrs these long-kept treasures.

Took heart at once Seytek batyr-
“Where’s my beloved land Talas?
Where’s my grandmother? Sage Bakai?
And if my nation suffers now,
I swear by heavens and the earth
I will fulfill my filial duty!
With war I’ll go and free Talas
There waits for me grandfather Manas!

The place where the holy spirit soars
Of my beloved natural father!
I will draw scores with Hanchoro!
I’ll save the old, hopeless men!
I’ll free my people out of shackles!
I’ll punish scoundrels and the traitors!
I won’t stay here a moment longer,
I must return to the bleeding people

Unity, honor and equality!
The blessed words of Khan Manas:
‘For yesterday, today, tomorrow,
For all eternity henceforth—
Either in liberty, or death!’”

Saddling the horses right away
While the drunk Khan Kyaz slept,
Seytek, Churok, and Gulchoro
Sped off in the quiet of night
To the valley of rivers, Ken-Kol, Talas.

DEATH OF KYAZ

As always in the late of morning
Woke up in his yurt Khan Kyaz.
He called his wife and asked to bring
A balmy bowl of fresh kymyz—
Yet Churok did not bring to him.
A silence was the sole reply.
He went to the yurt where Seytek slept—
Ai-Churok was not there as well,
His wife had vanished into air.

He checked on his herd— no Tooturu,
The young man's favorite horse he rode.
Then he remembered the old saying:
Regardless how much you feed a wolf,
He'll never turn into a yard dog.
Saddling his horse urgently,
Khan Kyaz rushed after them.
He caught up to the group at sunset,
In a mountain gorge with a wild river.
Letting their horse rest, a bit,
The three were warming by the fire.

"Don't be afraid, I won't hurt you,"
Khan Kyaz said peacefully.
"At first, I wanted to send the army
After the three of you today.
But then, I swore that none of you
Would leave this very land alive.
You know, my beautiful Churok,
I am a very lonely person,
That's the reason your son Seytek
Has the biggest place in my heart.
Please stay with me, my dear Seytek.

When I leave for another world,
You will become Khan Jediger.
You'll be in charge of everything—
The fate of people, wealth and power!"
Said to Seytek, Khan Kyaz.

"As the Shari'ah commanded us,
I do forgive you for father's death;
For that, my khan, you did repay,
You loved me just like a real father.
But now I must go to Talas,
Restore union among the clans
Who kill each other for their power!
My grandfather, Khan Manas,
My father, glorious Semetey,
Fought for that purpose, my ancestors
Up to their last days and last breaths.
I must fulfill the covenant:
'For yesterday, today, tomorrow,
For all eternity henceforth—
Either in liberty, or death!'
The words of my grandfather Manas!"
Replied to khan young Seytek.

"I beg you, dear Aichurok,
Stay with me, beloved wife,"
Khan Kyaz pleaded with her.

Aichurok replied only: "No."
In Manas' armor ak-olpok,
With merciless spear syr-naiza,
To Khan Kyaz came Gulchoro.
"You have forgotten, Khan Kyaz,
How with that nasty Hanchoro,
You forced us all to spill the blood
Both of your greed and of your malice—

You killed our glorious Semetey!
If his son forgave you that
I won’t forget and won't forgive.
And you, the traitor Khan Kyaz,
A mortal debt you owe to me!
Together, young Seytek and I
Could chop your head off here and now.
But in the middle— his mother, Churok,
She is the one who can judge us.
And you, dishonest Khan Kyaz,
On er-sayish I’ll call you out!”
Shouted the angry Gulchoro.

The two batyrs in that same hour
Started mortal er-sayish.
Sparkled and ringed their damask swords.
The spears were broke, the shields were bent—
Wounded each other, the two batyrs.
Regardless how hard they both fought,
The one could not finish the other.
Riding their horses at full speed,
They fought with the aibalta,
And so, they warred until the time
The brave Gulchoro found his chance
And pierced Khan Kyaz in the shoulder.
Looking in anguish one last time
Into the eyes of fair Churok,
Dead Khan Kyaz fell from his horse.

“And now the clans of Jediger
Need to elect another khan,”
Said the victorious Gulchoro.
Tying the dead khan to the saddle
Of his horse, Tooturu,
He hit the horse with a kamchy.
With his dead rider raced that horse
To join his herd in far Kashgar.

SEYTEK'S ARRIVAL IN TALAS

Passing the long, thorny road,
They did arrive on the fifth day
Into the valleys of the rivers,
Ken-Kol and beautiful Talas.
Came down to rest near the water,
And here they heard the forlorn cry
Of a tired and hungry camel—
It was the marching Bozingen
Who long time ago, Manas himself
Packed his weapons and stock upon.
The camel led a frail old lady
Who barely stood on her two feet—
A poor woman with a stick.

Seeing the people, she came up,
Stretched out her hand with a request.
“Forgive me, an old lady, dear people.
I suffer alone in the mountains
And wish no longer to be alive.
I plead to kill me all I see,
But not one soul would take that sin.
I was the true wife to Khan Manas,
A proud khanum, and a judge,
A gentle friend, and then a widow,
Now, in this very old age
Became a beggar and a servant.
My glorious son Semetey died.
Tell me, dear one, who are you?
And who are those who make your crew?”
In tears asked Kanykei.

“I am your grandson, Eneke!
My father’s your son, Semetey!
This is my mother, Ai-Churok;
My uncle Gulchoro with her.
Have you forgotten him by now?”
With a smile asked young Seytek.

“Am I seeing you all alive?”
Sobbed bitterly old Kanykei.
Embracing all her relatives,
Next to them Bozingen groaned.
Tears, just like lively diamonds
Rolled from the clever camel’s eyes.

SEYTEK IS ELECTED KYRGYZ KHAN

When they all arrived to Talas,
They had the people's Kurultai.
Gathered here were all the clans
From the ails and small towns too.
Each head of clans deliberated
The future fate of the Kyrgyz.
Learning the return of young Seytek,
Exultant were the Kyrgyz folk.
Manas' grandson all mature
Came back to his own fatherland
To the all-nation Kurultai.

Before the people he made his speech,
The eloquent ruler of the clans:
"We have to choose, from now on
The future path for all our lands!
The people get poorer day by day,
And lose their faith and honesty.
They steal, lie and betray,
Adulterous, behave like cattle!"
And then, took turn another leader:
"And our ruler Hanchoro
Is drunk each morning like a horse;
Along with slutty Chachykei
He emptied our nation's treasury.
The land, the cattle, and the herds
He gives to friends and relatives!"

"We thought that Hanchoro
Would save us all from poverty—
He did deceive us simple folk!"
Shouted the herdsman Karagul.

Before the crowd delivered then
The speech of leaders from each clan.
“We must bring down khan’s arrogance,
Remind him, who is the true ruler—
Our nationwide Kurultai!
And in the Khanate restore again
All that batyr Manas fought for:
‘Unity, equality and honor!’”

Old Khan Bakai came out next:
“My family! My Kurultai!
It’s clear now to everyone:
Hanchoro cannot rule!
Let Gulchoro pay him a visit,
He is the one to tell the khan
He needs to cede the ruler’s throne
And give young Seytek all the power!
That’s what decided the Kurultai!”
Finished his speech the sage Bakai.

Gulchoro turned messenger
And went with guards to khan sarai.
“Listen, my brother Hanchoro,
You won't rule our khanate anymore.
You brought the people to poverty.
Give young Seytek his rightful throne—
That’s the decision of Kurultai!
Or else, the angry people’s horde
Will bring your khan sarai to the ground—
The crowd will then decide your fate,”
Said with a bow, Gulchoro.

The Khan rubbed his eyes for a while,
As if drunk, even at dawn.
“I really could just kill you now,
But the united Kurultai

Will judge me harshly after that.
And if your teenage boy Seytek
Is so able to save the people
From famine, hunger, poverty,
Then the throne is his, I am not greedy:
I'm sick and tired of being a khan!
And I, except my Chachykei,
Do not need anything in life.
Let's drink to her, the rest away!"
Replied the drunken Hanchoro.

But Chachykei still had to meddle:
"When that gullible Khan Manas
Entrusted all power and treasury
To that Chinese father of yours,
That traitor, sneaky Almanbet
Who led the Kyrgyz into war,
And ruined them on Chinese walls.

Did you forget about this then?
Now you yourself, Gulchoro,
You want to fool the young Seytek,
To seize the power in the khanate
So then all of the Kyrgyz lands
Pass on to your Chinese kin!
And you, coward Hanchoro,
Couldn't figure out all this?"
Said viciously Chachykei.

In awful rage, Gulchoro
Grabbed the brazen woman by the braids
And threw her right against the wall.
Here, Hanchoro grabbed his dagger,
But it turned out he was too drunk—
He stumbled and fell on the carpet.
Much faster was Gulchoro
And into the heart of his brother
He stuck a dagger up to the handle.

When Gulchoro returned to the people,
He told about Hanchoro's death;
In the valley, like thunder
A slogan rang out over the land:
“Unity, equality, and honor!”

Lifting Seytek on a felt kiyiz
They placed a khan’s tebetei on him.
Wise old Bakai raised palms to heaven:
“Our creator! I beg of you:
Keep our people in unity!
Let our kin always continue!
The cattle grow and multiplies,
And grain pours into the bins!
To life and freedom and his work
Do not let anyone usurp!
Let our people for a thousand years
Forget their sorrows and troubles!

Give honor and wisdom to old men,
Give kindness, tenderness to mothers,
Give courage, high morals to sons,
And prudence to the daughters give!
Let people cherish, enjoy their freedom;
The faithful sons of Kyrgyz people,
Their blood they spilled and gave their lives!

Let Khan who comes to the Kyrgyz throne
Love his own people, like Manas!
Protect and guard this precious land
Passed down by our own ancestors!
Let our people unite forever!”

Shaking the heavens, mountains, forests
Under the sun thundered— “Oomin!”

Seytek

SEITEK
SEYTEK

GLOSSARY

Aba – Uncle
Abake – A loving way to call an uncle
Abalak – A wooden bat used when playing Ordo
Ach-Albars – An extremely sharp sword from folded steel
Ai – The moon, shining in the night
Aibalta – An axe
Ail – A village
Aimak (Mongolian) – A settlement
Ak – White; a symbol of purity
Akim – The ruler
Ak-kalpak – A woolen, felt white hat for Kyrgyz men
Ak-Kelte – Manas' gun
Ak-olpok – Battle wear
Ak-orgo – A white yurt
Aksakal – A respected elder
Ala-kiyiz – Felt rug without any patterns
Alaman – Races (usually horse races)
Alaman-baige – A prize given to winners of horse racing
Alas – Smoking with branch of fir tree (or sage) for spiritual blessing
Ala-alas – Spell, blessing
Alchiki – Bones of the knee joint for games of Ordo
Amu Darya – Name of a river in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan
Arak – Vodka
Argymak (argamak) – A race horse
Ash – A ceremonial wake
Ashar – "Helping out"; a community helps certain individuals by sharing their livestock of building a dwelling for new families (ones in need)
Ashpozchu – A chef
Ayash – Addressing to the spouse and the wife of the friend
Ayran – Sour milk, yogurt

Bai – A rich man

Baibiche – The eldest wife
Baige – Prize
Bakan – Pole
Balban-kurosh – Wrestling match
Balta – An axe
Baltyrkan – A mountain plant
Bashi – Ruler, chief
Batman – A measurement of mass, approximately four pounds
Batyr – A warrior, hero
Beshbarmak – A traditional Kyrgyz dish from meat and square-cut noodles
Beshment – A coat
Biykech – A maiden, unmarried young lady
Bichik (Kalmak) – A holy book
Bobo (Tajik.) – Grandfather
Boz-kise – A bag for the flint
Bozo – A drink from whole millet
Burut – The name which the Chinese and the Kal-myks used to refer to the Kyrgyz
Burdyuk – A leather bag for milk or any liquid
Buudan – A powerful horse

Chanach – A leather bag for kymyz; the same as a wineskin
Chapan – A robe; outerwear
Choor – A flute
Choro – A skilled warrior
Choychek – A wooden cup
Chylbyr – A leash for a horse
Chynar – Tree

Dambylda – A clergyman
Dambyldynyn ayaly – Wife of a clergyman
Darya – A river
Dastorkon – Tablecloth
Dobulbas – Battle drum
Duldul – A winged horse
Dun – Type of horse

Dyikan – A farmer

Eujigey – A dairy dish
Elechek – A married woman's headdress
Er – Hero
Er-sayish – A sporting battle of horsemen and spears (like jousting)

Ghee – Butter
Ichigi – Light women's boots
Ichik – A coat
Iskender – Alexander the Great
Jailoo – Highland pasture
Jamby – A shooting game where a bag hanging on a thin silk thread is full of silver or gold, a target for shooting
Jasol – The servant of the khan
Jeldet – A soldier
Jene (or Dzhene) – A respectful way of calling the wife of an elder brother
Jezde – The husband of the elder sister
Jengei (Kazakh) – A respectful way of calling the wife of an elder brother
Jigit – A young man, warrior, servant
Jolbors – A tiger
Juz – One hundred

Kakan — The Chinese ruler
Kalcha — How the Kyrgyz called Kalmaks
Kalym – A dowry given for a bride
Kamchy – A leather whip on a wooden handle
Kandagai – Sports trousers made of rawhide
Kangai – Chinese
Kapyr – A non-Muslim; an infidel
Kazan – A cauldron
Kelin (or Kelinchek) – Young married woman

Ken – Wide
Kerege – The wooden walls of the yurt
Kernei – A battle horn (woodwind musical instrument)

Khan – The ruler of the clan
Khanate – A state, political entity, rules by a khan or khagan
Khanum – Khan's wife
Kindik ene – A midwife
Kiyiz – Woolen rug
Koshok – A wailing song about the departed, expressing grief
Koshokchu – A woman who sings koshok
Koz atar – A sharp shooter, a sniper; literally "the one who shoots in the eye"
Kokui-Alat! – An interjection of despair; literally "Death came to take!"
Kuna – A payment for the dead
Kuresh – A wrestling fight
Kurjun – A sack
Kuroshchu – A wrestler
Kymyz – Fermented mare's milk
Kyz – A girl
Kyz-kuumai – "Catching up with the girl"; a sports game

Maidan – A battlefield, ring
Mankurt – "The one who lost memory"; not remembering one's kinship; usually enslaved men are turned into mankurt
Mergenchi – A hunter
Min – One thousand
Moldo – A clergyman
Moore – A seal (khan's seal)

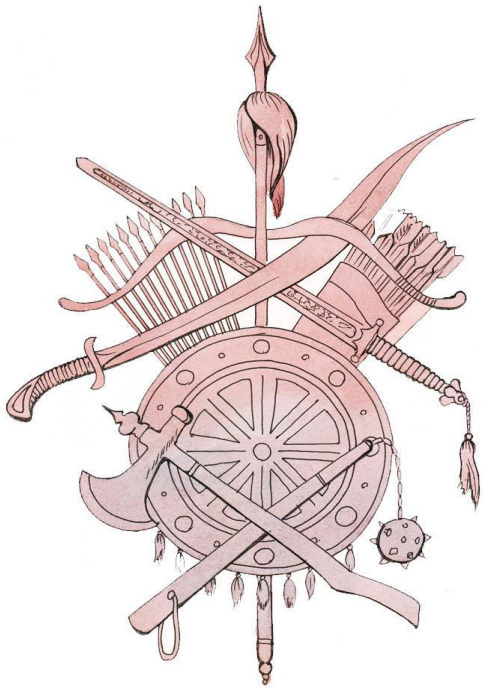
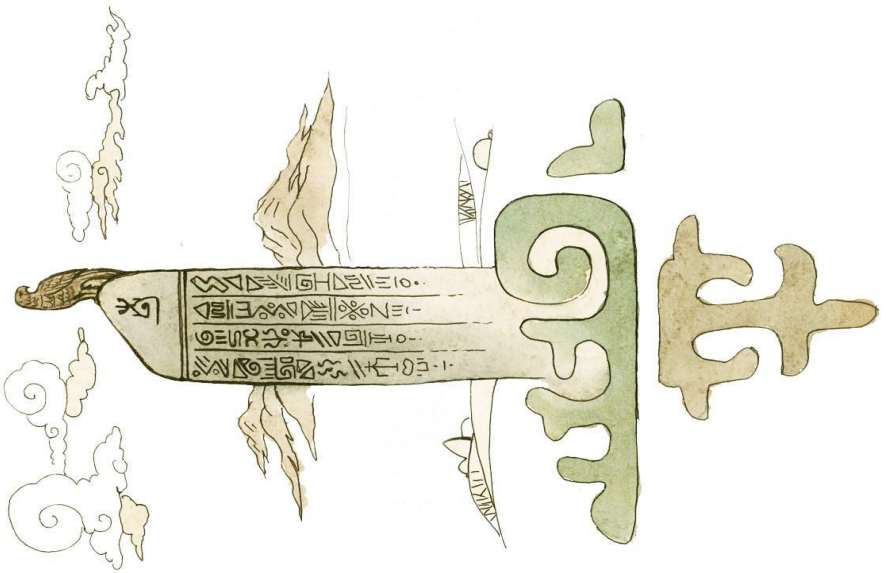
Nabob – A powerful person
Namaz – Muslim praying ritual
Nike — Ritual of marriage

On – Ten (on bashi – leader of ten)
Ooganistan – Present day Afganistan
Ordo – A game that involves knocking out alchiks (bones from knee joints of animals) in a circle
"Salam"; "Alik" – A greeting and an answer
Sacred Khyzyr (Kydyr) – An Islamic saint who protects people from evil

Sakas – Animal joint bones to play a game of Ordo
Sarai – A palace
Satrap – Governor
Sekira – A hatchet, an axe
Shaitan – The devil
Sher – A lion
Shyrdak – An embroidered carpet made from felt
Sunnat – Rite of circumcision
Surnai – A flute, pipe (woodwind musical instrument)
Suusar – Marten
Suyunchu – A reward for good news
Syr-Naiza – A painted spear

Tavak – A wooden plate
Taigan – A Kyrgyz dog breed
Talas – Region in Northern Kyrgyzstan
Tal-Choku – Name of a place in Kyrgyzstan
Tam-tam – A battle drum
Tardyk – A leather rug
Tebeitei – A round winter headdress
Tenge – Money
Tengir (Koke Tengir) – God of blue skies. Tengrism, also known as Tengriism or Tengrianism, is a Central Asian religion characterized by shamanism, animism, totemism, poly- and monotheism, and ancestor worship.
Tentek – A rowdy boy
Terdyk – A small cover under the saddle
Toguz korgool – A board game with a wooden plate and nine balls
Toi – A celebration ceremony
Tokol – Younger wife
Toraga – An elected speaker
Tule – A meal in honor of an event
Tulpar – Fairy-tale horse
Tyundyuk – Chimney of the yurt
Ukuruk – A wooden stick with a loop to catch a horse or cattle
Zam-zam — Holy water from Mecca

Zeket — A tax on livestock
Zindan — A prison pit

A Kyrgyz belief mentioned in the epos:

Dreams where one has a tiny dot under eye or a person who has a birthmark under their eye are interpreted as having the abilities of an “evil eye,” with which they can unwillingly cause harm to another.